How does reading support resilience?
An interdisciplinary narrative study with children and adults

by

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Abstract

Anecdotal evidence suggests that adults are very much influenced by what they read as children. This interdisciplinary thesis examines the effect that reading books and stories can have to support resilience strategies. It centers on the following research question: *How does the reading of text-based narratives (in children's literature) support the development of resilience in children (ages 10 – 13 years)*? In this question, reading refers to recreational reading; narrative refers to a textual story; and resilience refers to the ability of the reader to adapt to situations. This thesis reviews and combines key concepts about how readers engage with narratives and the act of reading. It examines literatures from education, literary theory, reader-response theory, bibliotherapy, human development and library science. Fifteen children between the ages of 10 and 13 years and sixteen adults between the ages of 18 and 91 years were interviewed. Analysis of the data, both thematic and narrative results, indicate that both the act of reading for pleasure and the narrative being read support positive coping strategies (such as self-regulation). Such strategies help to build resilience in human beings. Responses from participants assisted in providing a model of coping skills and positive behaviour. For example, the act of reading itself becomes a recovery mechanism in response to coping with stressful situations. Implications for further research into reading and mood-management and the benefits of re-reading are presented.

Keywords

Reading for pleasure, narrative, resilience, protective factor, coping mechanism

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Anecdotal evidence suggests that adults are very much influenced by what they read as children - "Books were far more than an amusement in my childhood; they were my other lives, and this visible existence I now lead in the workaday world was touched and transformed by them forever. The spell was never broken..." (Landsberg as cited in Lesnik-Oberstein, 2002, p. 6). What causes this transformation and what are its effects?

This thesis endeavours to answer these questions by centering on the following research question: *How does the reading of text-based narratives (in children's literature) support the development of resilience in children (ages 10 – 13 years)*? In this question, reading refers to the recreational reading, the term narrative refers to a textual story while resilience refers to the ability of the reader to adapt to situations, whether adverse or not. These concepts are described and discussed in more detail in the next chapter encompassing the literature review.

The thesis makes a contribution to the emerging discussion around effects of literature, as evidenced by Oatley, Mar, and Djikic (2012), who observed

> In education, it has been assumed that fiction is worthwhile, and teachers of literature, from primary school to graduate school, use literature in discussions both of understanding others and of understanding oneself. We may perhaps look forward to thinking of how evidence that fiction can promote certain kinds of personal and interpersonal improvements might affect education. (p. 244)

Thus, this thesis hopes to contribute to furthering both the discussion and application of the effects of recreational reading by further bridging the divide between cognitive psychology and literary studies and focuses on the effect of story on human development, specifically via engagement with textual narratives while reading. This interdisciplinary research topic combines

disciplinary viewpoints from human development, cognitive psychology, sociology and education, and the fields of narrative studies and narrative inquiry in the humanities and social sciences (itself an interdisciplinary endeavour) and validated by Oatley et al., (2012).

Guiding Research Questions

The fields of psychology and sociology discuss the concept of protective factors such as engagement with a nurturing family member, or community. However, these disciplines do not usually classify the act of reading as a protective factor since the act of reading is considered an individualized activity, dependent primarily upon individual preferences. By contrast, in the field of education, engagement with textual narratives via reading – particularly during school hours – is regarded as a vital activity for children to help them grow into contributing members of society, specifically in terms of encouraging literacy.

Combining and synthesizing literature and data surrounding "narrative" and "resilience" from differing disciplinary perspectives constructs a more detailed picture of how reading stories could be said to affect human development in general, and coping skills, or resilience, in particular, in children. For example, sociology provides understanding of the importance of age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status in studying the social phenomena of reading while narrative studies has shown how readers are engaged by narrative structures. Finally, the field of human development provides information on how developmental pathways are created and what factors are necessary to be present to nurture and sustain them.

In viewing these disciplinary insights in relation to each other there is a noticeable chasm in the research literature. There exists a plethora of secondary literature within the realm of education and reader-response theory claiming that specific books of children's literature could help to strengthen resilience in children because of either the story or the character(s) and their

described actions. Masten (2009) does list books as an asset or resource which could be used by schools to counterbalance risk factors, but does not explain in detail what would make reading these books an asset (p. 31). Positive interaction with nurturing humans is most often cited as an asset or resource over interaction with inanimate objects. Of course being read to is not an interaction with an inanimate object but with a person. Examples of such books are Humphrey (2008) and Cecil & Roberts (1992) and while these books purport to help develop resilience through children's literature, there are no follow-up studies which validate the claims made in these books. This represents a gap in empirical evidence in the secondary literature in either education or the realm of human development of actual studies of children exposed to such structured reading and guided interpretation to see if it has indeed supported the creation of pathways to resilience. This gap has also been identified by Parsons (2006) who states: "…although reading for pleasure has been identified as one of the forty key indicators of a resilient child, neither literature scholars nor psychologists have had anything to say about how reading for pleasure builds resilience" (p. 129).

Resilience is based within each individual human being and such a great diversity of data exists from ongoing research, that it is difficult to identify a single process which will ensure the same protective level of resilience in everyone, even though,

> …much more has been learned about the timing of these factors and the different ways they may work in the lives of children of different ages, situations, and domains of function. The same factor, for example, may work in different ways for different ages of children or different aspects of competence. (Masten, 2009, p. 29)

More important is the recognition that,

> …resilience does not require extraordinary resources in most cases,…[but rather t]he multiplicity of adaptive systems – which is likely the result of many thousands of years of biological and cultural evolution – accounts for the diversity across individuals and also explains the many different pathways to resilience. (Masten, 2009, p. 30)

The key is therefore to recognize and support these various adaptive systems of protective factors to enable growth and strengthening of resilience throughout human development. This thesis asks: Does reading and narrative allow for this? How and by what process?

In current scholarship, the link between reading and resilience could be described as the presentation of having gained knowledge as defined by Coulter, Michael, and Poynor (2007), ”Knowledge emerges through narrative when it is used strategically and connected in an ongoing dialogic between “telling” and “doing,” between narrative, reflection, and praxis” (pp. 120-121). This knowledge gained via reading and applied to real-life could be expressed by the research subject’s recognition of the value of narratives in their emerging life stories, as illustrated by an editorial in a popular parenting magazine:

> When I was three “some pig” changed my life. My mother was reading me Charlotte’s Web by E. B. White, and I was enthralled…Looking back, I can see why the story mattered so much. Around that time, I’d been diagnosed with an illness that sometimes left me feeling a bit like Wilbur – cut off from family and lacking hope. Charlotte, meanwhile, tipped me off to the importance of being my own cheerleader. And Fern was just the kind of girl I wanted to be when I grew up: a champion of justice who did all right with the boys. (Izenberg, 2008, p. 10)

Izenberg’s recognition that certain characteristics of the main characters helped her cope with and overcome the isolation which she felt while being ill overtly describes the basis for the

creation of a pathway leading to resilience based on childhood reading material. Furthermore, integrating the various disciplinary insights leads to the conclusion, theoretically, that examples of demonstrated and expected behaviours which are mediated via narrative can indeed help shape human development in general, and resilience, specifically. This work helps to identify and label the following theoretical developmental pathway:

Figure 1. Theoretical Developmental Pathway

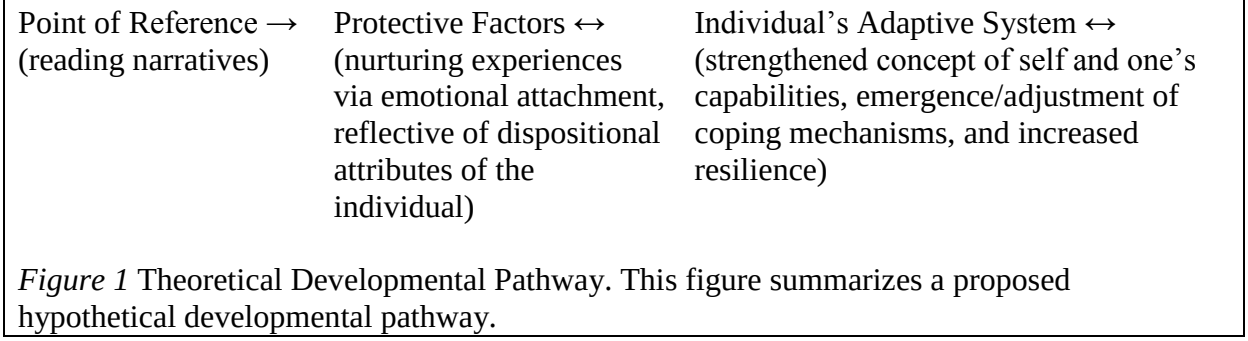

Figure 1 Theoretical Developmental Pathway. This figure summarizes a proposed hypothetical developmental pathway.

It is important to note that this pathway is neither universal nor static nor a one-way pathway. Instead, it is fluid as it relies upon the individual reader's personal points of reference which change over time, and how these can be seen to create or support existing protective factors. As more factors are added and more experiences are made, both positive and negative, those experiences are fed back into the creation and/or maintenance of the points of reference that in turn either strengthen existing protective factors or build new ones and allow the individual to adapt to differing situations. This pathway is not "causal" as used in the scientific research community; instead, "cause" is used as defined by Polkinghorne (1988),

> In general usage… "cause" means whatever produces an effect, result, or consequence, and it can include events, people's actions, or other conditions. Because narrative cause can relate to the antecedents of a peculiar sequence that may never be repeated, its meaning is different from that meaning of cause in formal science. (p. 173)

What is still missing from this entire discussion of the theoretical pathway is empirical data. In the field of reading, some research was conducted with adults readers in the early 1990s, primarily at libraries (Sabine & Sabine, 1983) by those who were trying to move literacy forward by eliciting support for the assumption that it is important for people to read, regardless of the reading material readers chose to read. Another example is the *Young People's Reading* study undertaken in the UK in 1970s and then repeated in 1995, which discusses the reading habits of children aged between 10 and 14 (Hall & Coles, 1999). The age range was expanded in the 1995 study to cover the ages 4 – 16 years. The project focused on girls' and boys' reading preferences and reading habits; the place of series books, teenage magazines and comics in children's reading; the most popular authors and titles at different ages; and purchasing habits and library use. Among the many findings of both studies was the explanation that younger children read more than older children, that time spent on reading decreases with age, and that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds read less than children from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Not surprisingly, children were found to have eclectic reading tastes, attesting to their individuality (Maynard, Mackay, Smyth, & Reynolds, 2007). While the data collected by this study is vital in understanding correlations between age, gender, and reading preferences, the researchers did not relate book preferences to the children's personality and individual circumstances, as the study was more quantitative than qualitative in nature.

More recently, a movement to reading for empathy has been discussed in the secondary literature, as evidenced by recent work completed by Mar, Oatley, and Peterson (2009). In the field of narrative inquiry, research has validated the importance of narrative to the construction of self-identity (Bruner, 2004; Djikic, Oatley, Zoeterman, & Peterson, 2009; Mar, Oatley, Djikic,

and Mullin (2011).What is needed is to combine the theory and its practical applications with empirical data.

As the theoretical pathway described in Figure 1 is not based on any empirical studies and, anecdotally adults have shared the information that certain books and their characters have helped them through difficult situations, narrative inquiry was chosen as the proposed methodology for completing the research. With this research methodology, data consisting of personal narratives were collected and analyzed by asking both children and adults about their reading habits. The thesis integrates already existing knowledge from various disciplines to identify a link between reading books and developing resilience competencies in children on their journey to adulthood by analyzing the personal narratives of children and adults for the presence of such a link.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to answer the main research question *How does the reading of text-based narratives (in children's literature) support the development of resilience in children (ages 10 – 13 years)?* two subsequent guiding questions were formulated to organize the literature review and field research conducted with 15 children and 16 adults. The chapter is organized by sub-questions and corresponding definitions of key terminology used in the questions which flow into discussions of the constructs of culture, narrative (in particular children's literature and reading) and resilience. These discussions provide the reader with an initial overview of the linkages and overlaps between the various disciplinary viewpoints.

How do children learn about culture via reading narratives? What does this mean for them?

Definition of culture. A good starting point for a definition of culture is the following description of four broad concepts resulting from a historical survey completed by Kahler (1968):

1) culture as a human condition, which implies a value

2) the value-free concept of culture as a specific way of life, style of life, of a people, or…as the totality of customs and ways of life of a people

3) culture as an ethnic entity pure and simple

4) culture as a regionally meta-ethnic entity (pp. 15-16).

In the early 1970s, anthropologists narrowed in on the second definition: "…the entire way of life of a people, including their technology and material artifacts" (Swidler, 1986, p. 273). In this sense culture was associated as something which enabled the setting apart and identification of differences between separate social communities. This early and quite rigid view was then

replaced with the view that culture is defined as publicly available symbolic forms through which people experience and express meaning (Swidler, 1986, p. 273). Culture thus became an all-encompassing phenomenon as expressed by Rosaldo (1993),

> Culture lends significance to human experience by selecting from and organizing it. It refers broadly to the forms through which people make sense of their lives, rather than more narrowly to the opera or art museums. It does not inhabit a set-aside domain, as does, for example, that of politics or economics. From the pirouettes of classical ballet to the most brute of brute facts, all human conduct is culturally mediated. Culture encompasses the everyday and the esoteric, the mundane and the elevated, the ridiculous and the sublime. Neither high nor low, culture is all pervasive. (as cited in James, 2003, p. 26)

Hence, culture is not something static or final, but rather

> ...culture tends to be regarded not as an explicit product but as a prefiguration or grounds of social relations. The other view emphasizes culture as a kind of symbolic good or commodity that is explicitly produced. It arises from social interaction, either as an intended or unintended consequence of behaviour, takes on some distinct observable form, and then acts back on the broader social environment. (Wuthnow & Witten, 1988, p. 50)

From a sociological viewpoint then, culture is a malleable construct existing in social relations, symbols, and practices which is continuously acted upon and conversely acts upon the members of a certain social community. More specifically, what an individual experiences as culture is an all-encompassing cycle:

> …present-day culture consists of elements that appeared at different times for varied reasons. Moreover, not all of the earlier elements survive until the present; other influences cause some to remain and others to disappear. From this perspective, the ongoing culture that we experience is best thought of as a "cultural surface," representing a diverse set of births, a variety of causes responsible for the continued appearance of existing elements, and additional conditions that have caused other elements to disappear. (Lieberson, 2000, p. 258)

Such a cycle combines old with new: "[e]xisting cultural elements are a crucial building block for new cultural developments; indeed, what is "new" is often a novel combination of the old with some additional input (Barnett 1953)" (as cited in Lieberson, 2000, p. 266).

The constant and bi-directional interplay thus described does not create a unified and cohesive construct, but rather, "[c]ritical theorists remind us that culture cannot be conceptualized in terms of unified systems of meaning, but rather as conflicting, contradictory, ambiguous, dynamic, and full of contending discourses…" (James, 2003, p. 28). These discourses can come from social characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, ability, age, and sexual orientation, along with education, citizenship status, political affiliation, etc., which all influence the attitudes, perception, personality, and motivation of an individual (James, 2003, p. 35). In addition, these cultural characteristics are further acted upon by

> [s]ocializing agents such as the family, teachers, peers, mentors, coaches, significant others and the society in which the individual lives…When combined [with the social characteristics], these inter-related factors play a role in the socialization process, in the nature of the culture that is transmitted and constructed by the individual and ultimately in the behaviour of that individual. (James, 2003, p. 35)

In summary, the concept of culture is a complex construct consisting of non-hierarchical, ever-evolving, and changing components, whose boundaries cannot be clearly defined, but which are and can be individualized, within a communal social context.

Construction of culture. As discussed above, culture is a construct and as such consists of components identified as cultural artifacts and cultural tropes constructed by cultural agents in the research literature: "…cultural artifacts are produced by agents implementing their agendas in contexts that constrain what they can accomplish, … [and] which are used and shaped in different contexts to create and replicate differing cultural meanings,…" (Watkins & Swidler, 2009, pp. 171-172). However, since it is commonly recognized that it is difficult to research this kind of agency, Swidler (1986) defined "...culture as a 'tool kit' for constructing 'strategies of action" (p. 277), which would make it easier for researchers to determine the causality of specific cultural agents. This view of culture effectively changes the foci of research from being result-oriented to being action-oriented and makes members of a social community both active participants in creating and sustaining culture and passive recipients and carriers of culture.

Di Maggio (1997) develops this notion of an interactive construct further by explaining how culture works through the interaction of three forms: information, mental structures, and symbol systems,

> First, we have information, distributed across persons (Carley, 1991). Such distribution is patterned, but not highly differentiating, due to the indiscriminant manner in which bits of culture are accumulated and stored in memory (Gilbert, 1991). Second, we have mental structures, especially schematic representations of complex social phenomena, which shape the way we attend to, interpret, remember, and respond emotionally to the information we encounter and possess. Such schemata are more clearly socially patterned

> than are memory traces. Finally, we have culture as symbols systems external to the person, including the content of talk, elements of the constructed environment, media messages, and meanings embedded in observable activity patterns. (pp. 273-274)

The over-arching concept combining these three forms of interaction is the idea of the pattern, reflecting one of Williams' (1976) definitions – "[c]ulture is also a pattern of living and a way of understanding" (as cited in Duncombe, 2002, p. 35), denoting a sense of structure. This construct of a pattern is flexible and can be varied according to the perceived response necessary to or in a given situation, as determined by the individual. By overlaying this patterning concept of a construct with the very broad and nebulous definition of culture presented by the researcher in the preceding section, it presents a scaffold in an intangible way of how individuals interact with culture during their lifetimes.

Swidler (1986) subsequently goes further in aligning culture and life trajectory as being interrelated and defines this alignment as a symbiotic relationship:

> ...cultural elements and life strategy are, in effect, chosen simultaneously. Indeed, the meanings of particular cultural elements depend, in part, on the strategy of action in which they are embedded...Nonetheless; culture has an effect in that the ability to put together such a strategy depends on the available set of cultural resources. Furthermore, as certain cultural resources become more central in a given life, and become more fully invested with meaning, they anchor the strategies of action people have developed. (p. 281)

She then goes on to define how strategies of cultural products are subsequently action:

> …the symbolic experiences, mythic lore, and ritual practices or a group or society create moods and motivations, ways of organizing experience and evaluating reality, modes of

> regulating conduct, and ways of forming social bonds, which provide resources for constructing strategies of action. When we notice cultural differences, we recognize that people do not all go about their business the same ways; how they approach life is shaped by their culture. (Swidler, 1986, p. 284)

Moreover, "[p]eople formulate, flesh out, and put into practice new habits of action. In such situations, culture may indeed be said to directly shape action....People developing new strategies of action depend on cultural models to learn styles of self, relationship, cooperation, authority, and so forth" (Swidler, 1986, p. 279). Culture can therefore be regarded to be structured in such a way that is not only enables but also shapes strategies of action, and therefore shapes both the strategy itself and its outcome. The identification of the shaping of strategies within the framework of culture in narratives will thus have to be achieved in the realm of outward expressions, such as oral histories.

Culture and narrative.

> *"We have been telling stories since the beginning of time as a way of passing down beliefs, traditions and history to future generations." (Ahn & Filipenko, 2007, p. 279)*

> *"Listening and telling stories are cultural activities. As children learn the story form, they also learn about their culture. In turn, through stories, aspects of their culture shape the way they think about and remember experiences." (Engel, 1995, p. 10)*

While these two quotations illustrate the close relationship between narrative, or story, and culture, which is widely recognized and discussed in the research literature, this relationship is also very much generalized. The research literature does not explicitly demonstrate "how" culture is transmitted via narrative, but does agree that "Narrative is one of the more complex

and important kinds of cultural models….On the one hand, the term "narrative" refers to the activity of adjusting and creating reality through talking it out…On the other hand, narrative also refers to the instituted result of this structuring process" (Shore, 1996, p. 58). The discussion, which follows, summarizes some of the most common themes which have arisen in the examination of this dual concept of narrative, simultaneously structuring while creating.

To begin the discussion, it can be stated that the research literature does agree that the main medium connecting culture and narrative is language:

> Narrative voice refers to the notion that every story is expressed through a person and through that person's use of a medium, language. The person speaking and the language he uses shape, color, and highlight the events and ideas being described. The style and genre in which he tells his story express who he is as an individual as well as how he fits into his culture. (Engel, 1995, p. 153)

Language is a system of signs as well as being a system which structures relations between signs and speech, and these relations are what enable the articulation of a meaning (Shires & Cohan, 1988, p. 21). The signs combine a concept and a written or visual image as well as a spoken one within a narrative to enable the narratee to create meaning. In this manner, the signs create various codes within the narrative. Two such codes, as identified by Roland Barthes, are the semic code (concerning characterization) and the reference code (the common knowledge in culture) (Netley, 1992, p. 199). Graesser and Clark (1985) have labeled two kinds of knowledge structures within the reference code that are activated during comprehension of a narrative text: specific knowledge structures (SKSs) and generic knowledge structures (GKSs). SKSs relate to the particular lived and reading experiences of individual readers and contain personal experience, which are not automatically activated during comprehension, and therefore require

extra cognitive resources and processing time (Philpot, 2005, p. 149). GKSs include "stereotypes, schemata, scripts, and frames…and are triggered automatically during comprehension and processed easily" (Philpot, 2005, p. 149).

Consideration must also be given to the dual concepts of "working memory" and "secondary memory" when discussing inferential treatment of a narrative by a narratee. According to Graesser and Clark (1985), "Secondary memory is a vast storehouse of specific knowledge structures, generic knowledge structures, and active symbolic procedures. Working memory is a limited capacity workspace where procedures and processes are executed when a person interacts with the world" (p. 41). Combining this dual concept of "working" and "secondary" memory with the belief that all are surrounded by culture as previously described by Rosaldo (1993), then the way narratives are interpreted is most certainly influenced by the cultural traditions the reader has been exposed to, experienced, or acquired as readers throughout their lifetime and stored in their memories. And symbiotically, to show how culture has affected a reader through narrative, the reader constructs their own narratives:

> [W]e organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on. Narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally and constrained by each individual's level of mastery and conglomerate of prosthetic devices, colleagues, and mentors...Narratives, then, are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and "narrative necessity" rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness... (Bruner, 1991, pp. 4-5)

In conclusion, it can be said that culture is both constructed and transmitted via narrative when viewed through the critical lens of individual meaning making and it will be important to

recognize and identify how constructed and transmitted culture has influenced the construction of autobiographical narratives.

Culture and children's literature. If culture can be said to be constructed and transmitted through narrative, then how is this accomplished by children in their reading of children's literature? Once again the common denominator seems to be language and narratives:

> …since language is the most common form of social communication, and one particular use of language through which society seeks to exemplify and inculcate its current values and attitudes is the imagining and recording of stories. A narrative without ideology is unthinkable: ideology is formulated in and by language, meanings within language are socially determined, and narratives are constructed out of language. (Stephens, 1992, p. 8)

Thus, "[l]anguage is the child's passport into his culture. If this is true of language in general, then it is particularly true of narratives. Narratives, on one hand, have some universality….On the other hand, each culture, each community, has its own way of telling stories" (Engel, 1995, p. 46). These stories consist of units of significance, as observed earlier, which are labeled by Hunt (1985) as, "…discriminate discrete events which make up the text of a narrative…Such elements can be seen… as 'culturally marked significant actions'…" (p. 113). Explicit references about culture transmission in children's literature when teaching literature as part of the school curriculum are references to representations of foreign cultures, which give children the opportunity "to see how other people live, think, and perceive the world, and to see their own lives reflected in the characters and topics they encounter" (Bond, 2006, p. 70). Ideally, by introducing children to other cultures or immersing them in their own culture, the belief is that engagement with these representations would instill tolerance. A Canadian example would be as

follows: "[t]he more all Canadians are exposed to the thoughts of others within our country, the more we will understand our similarities and differences, and be willing to work towards the common good for all people in Canada" (Ward, 2006, p. 50). If the child is immersed within their own culture, then "…children's literature can often perform a similar function to family meetings: where we relate our individualities to our unique national setting. We can express our beginnings, our current situations, and our future in this country together" (Ward, 2006, p. 51).

The focus of this thesis, however, is not upon ethnic-specific narratives, but rather, upon textual narratives in general. By the very fact that culture is pervasive and enveloping, narratives can be labeled as cultural products whilst creating culture, especially since "it is also important to realize that neither a language system nor its discourse is ever singular, universal, and timeless. On the contrary, both are plural, cultural, and historical" (Shires & Cohan, 1988, p. 24).

It has been universally accepted that reading books, including picture books, "provides children with early and sometimes first experiences with attitudes surrounding race and gender, obedience and disobedience, and death, loss, and separation" (Alexander, Miller, & Hengst, 2001, p. 378). This process of the socialization of the child via narrative has been described as learning 'ways with words'. This term refers to teaching children ways of using language, specifically through capturing their experience in narrative, which is similar to Bruner's concept of "do things with words" -

> The point is that language development is indeed, as Bruner says, a matter of learning 'how to do things with words.' However, what those 'things' consist of – and what behaviour counts as an instance of any one of them – are matters determined by the reflexive practices of the cultural environment in which the child is raised.
> (Shanker & Taylor, 2001, p. 61)

Since "an individual's perceptions and judgments are a function of the assumptions shared by the group he belongs to" (Hunt, 1985, p. 107) and children are continually "…in the process of learning the narrative traditions of their families and communities, [since] they have incomplete and evolving knowledge of such narrative traditions" (Lee, Rosenfeld, Mendenhall, Rivers, & Tynes, 2004, p. 41), the transmission of culture via narrative structures in children's literature is an important socialization tool, providing examples of practical applications for behaviour, etc., in the world of adults, and by extension, could be said to help in the developing of positive coping skills.

Narrative and children's literature. Children's literature has been broadly defined as "…books read by, especially suitable for, or especially satisfying for, members of the group currently defined as children" (Hunt, 1991, p. 61). More specifically, it denotes "a body of literature into which the dominant social, cultural and educational norms are inscribed" (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 13). Two basic functions of children's literature, which is for the most part written by adults, have also been identified in the field of children's literature: "…some scholars advocated a role of literature as 'useful' or 'instructive' in some moral sense, while others maintained that stories existed primarily or even purely to give pleasure…" (Crago, 2005, p. 183). This duality in purpose can be traced back to the origins of children's literature, which was and continues to be written specifically for children by adults and is mostly of a didactic and socializing nature and used as a means to teach children the ways of the adult world.

In terms of narrative fiction, the research literature does not differentiate between narratives written for adults and those written for children in content, characterization, etc., except for how the narrator addresses the reader:

> If anything differentiates narratives for adults from those of children, then I suggest this difference resides in aspects of the telling: tone or mood. The narrative voice, whether that be the voice of the narrator or the voice of an implied author behind the narrator, will embrace us in a children's book. This does not mean that such books cannot be complex in theme or structure or image, only that the voice that tells us the story is warm and reliable. And by reliable, I mean reliable in the sense that we trust the narrator not consciously to lead us astray. (Wyile, 1999, p. 193)

The idea of being able to trust the narrator/implied author in children's books more readily than in adults' books relates back to the notion that material written for children should be more straight-forward and less sophisticated as the audience is less mature, as discussed above. This idea is firmly planted in the notion of childhood and its function as created by the adult world and imposed on the child. James and Prout (1997) suggest childhood is "a social construct" and "an actively negotiated set of social relationships within which the early years of human life are constructed" (p. 7). While childhood has become a social institution created by adults and has gained status as a distinct phase within the realm of human development, in practice there is no universal childhood and thus, there is no universal child. Ultimately the concept of childhood is neither timeless nor universal, but must take into account the temporal and cultural specificity of ideas and social constructions (James & Prout, 1997). Therefore it should be possible for a researcher to discern the specifics of a construct of culture when examining personal narratives, as these specifics would act as markers, anchoring an individual in a specific time and place. Since children are usually first introduced to stories via pictures, narrative fiction and non-fiction in children's literature first take the shape of picture books, in which visual narratives have a more dominant role over the textual narrative. As the reading comprehension level of the reader

progresses, reading material with visual narrative in the form of illustrations begins to lessen in volume in comparison to the text as the emergent reader progresses through the material, ultimately leading to books without illustrations.

Textual and visual narratives can also be found in the shape of age-appropriate poetry, video games, graphic novels, and more recently social media technology such as blogs, twitter, memes and Instagram. The level of consumption of all of these forms of narrative can be aligned roughly with the phased human development trajectory of a human child. Beginning as a non-textual reader, the young child at infant, toddler, and preschool age is confronted with visual and sensorial stimulation found in picture books, especially those enhanced with tactile embellishments. Then, while learning how to read, the child is encouraged to use the visual narrative to help him/her ascertain what will come next in the textual narrative. Having gradually learned the skill of reading words and sentences, the words enable the youth reader to engage his or her imagination and create his or her own "micro-worlds", regardless of the medium used for the narrative and as defined by Graesser and Wiemer-Hastings (1999):

> When a reader comprehends a story, the reader constructs a mental micro-world. The micro-world includes the core plot that sustains the interest of the reader: the characters who perform actions in pursuit of goals, events that present obstacles to goals, conflicts between characters, clever methods or resolving conflicts, and emotional reactions to events and conflicts. (p. 77)

The process of continually internalizing the externalized world presented in both visual and textual narratives along with the building up of this internalized world as the child gains more and more life experiences can also be used to explain why and how children "outgrow" books

(i.e., books enjoyed at one age are usually discarded at a different, later age because of the cumulative effect of more and more lived experiences).

The intended audience of children's literature and the specific message to be conveyed can be directly linked to the narrative strategy which is employed by the author: "…children's literature is governed by various changing principles and norms – didactic, ideological, moral, ethical, religious – which determine what kind of literature children are provided within a certain culture at a certain time" (Puurtinnen, 1994, p. 84). What must be remembered, though, is that the audience (child readers) is not a homogenous group in which everyone reads at the same level and with the same expertise, and brings the same lived experiences to the narrative. In fact, "children are *developing* readers; their approach to life and text stems from a different set of cultural standards from those of adult readers…" (Hunt, 1991, p. 87), and how the text helps a child reader to approach those adult standards is achieved via the organization of the textual narrative:

> Linguistic codes do not reflect reality neutrally, they interpret, organize, and classify the subjects of discourse. They embody theories of how the world is arranged: world-views or ideologies. For the individual, these theories are useful and reassuring, making his relationship with the world simple and manageable." (Fowler as cited in Hunt, 1991, p. 89)

Therefore, to assist in the creation of the micro-world mentioned earlier by Graesser and Wiemer-Hastings (1999) and the transition from the world of the narrative to the real world by the child reader, it is necessary to understand that the narrative relationship between the child and the narrative is ultimately extended into personal relationships, specifically those with adults, as observed by Gooderham (1997),

> What should be, more specifically, added here is that a narrative relationship established in and by a text will, in various ways, affect children's relations with adults in contexts beyond the reading of that text…it may at least be observed that narrative relationships in texts are structurally powerful devices and can therefore be deployed with expectations about the reader's orientation as she/he comes to the end of a text. (p. 69)

Surprisingly, there are still only very few empirical studies in the research literature which address the affective functions of narrative and children's emotional development as evidenced by the call to action made by Gold and Gloade (1988):

> What is required is empirical demonstration that fiction matters to the mental health and life skills of readers. When people are shown clearly that reading imaginative literature is of immediate practical significance to them in their daily lives they will seek to acquire the skills and practice and insist on such skills for their children. (p. 243)

Most of the current empirical studies are "…case histories conducted by researcher-parents, insiders with steady access to the child's world" (Alexander, et al., 2001, p. 375). Nevertheless, an assumption is often stated that "stories help children cope with the ordinary stressful experiences of childhood (e.g., Bettelheim, 1977)," (Alexander et al., 2001, p. 376), and

> …while psychologists have focused exclusively on the psychological content of stories, scholars of children's literature remind us that the aesthetic properties of the story cannot be separated from the content of the story. Indeed, it is often the child's attraction to the aesthetic properties of the story – the aural and visual rhythmic patterns, the characters who invite identification and empathy – that inspires his or her emotional attachment to the story. (Hearne as cited in Alexander et al., 2001, p. 377)

Researchers need to look directly to the child to give them answers about a possible affective relationship between narrative and development and it is somewhat fitting that to be able to ascertain the effect of consumed narrative on a child, the researcher ultimately would have to rely upon the child's created narrative, as this method of collecting data would produce the richest data source. The close relationship between reading and writing has been summarized by Manguel (1996). He claims that reading necessarily precedes writing in the following observation:

> Reading – I discovered – comes before writing. A society can exist – many do exist – without writing, but no society can exist without reading…Even in societies that set down a record of their passing, reading precedes writing; the would-be writer must be able to recognize and decipher the social system of signs before setting them down on the page. For most literate societies – reading is at the beginning of the social construct... (p. 7)

Whether reading or writing, however, the interaction with narrative structures creates meaning for the reader since narratives, "…contain potential meanings structured in the complex linguistic and semantic code-systems" (Hunt, 1991, p. 89). Meanings created by the reader are intensely personal and thus individualized and are created, "by building up interlinked kinds of meaning, from denotation, connotation, and inter- and intra-textual meaning" (Hunt, 1991, p. 96). It is these meanings, which are partly a culmination of cultural influences from a variety of sources, including text-based narratives, which help the child negotiate the world around them and help them determine their own behaviour in certain situations.

The secondary literature is filled with generalized statements such as the following which amount to no more than subjective observations: "Literature provides children with many examples of how to cope with feelings of anger….Literature can play a dramatic role in helping

children develop positive and realistic self-concepts" (Norton, 1991, p. 22), as they are not supported by empirical evidence. The notion that children's literature can help define and support a sense of self-identity is also widely represented in the secondary literature:

> Personality development in children is extremely important. If children do not understand themselves and believe that they are important, how can they value anyone else? Many literary selections and literature-related experiences reinforce positive personality development. Such experiences include reading orally in a warm and secure environment, discussing and acting out various roles from literature, and simply enjoying a wide variety of literature. (Norton, 1991, p. 24)

However, as detailed by Norton's quotation, the secondary literature also emphasizes how important it is for a child reader to be not only engaged by the text itself, but also by the entire act of reading, which starts with the look and feel of the book before it is read, the environment in which the reading will take place, etc. In considering these environmental factors which are an integral part of the act of reading, and which contribute to the making of the experience of reading, a close study of the relationship which children's books are said to try to have with their child readers is vital since,

> Literature can help children understand their feelings, identify with characters who experience similar feelings, and gain new insights into how others have coped with the same problems. According to Masha Rudman and Anna Pearce, "[B]ooks can serve as mirrors for children, reflecting their appearance, their relationships, their feelings and thoughts in their immediate environment" (p. 159). In addition, books can act as windows on the world, inviting children to look beyond themselves and to form bonds with characters and circumstances. (Norton, 1991, p. 18)

The creation of bonds between the child reader and the characters and environments of a narrative has been labeled as "adventuring in a book," described by Sarland (1985) as follows "…we construct our futures by inventing scenarios to be lived out in the real world,…Fiction presents us with alternative worlds, and for young readers these are likely to be read as virtual futures" (p. 106). Being able to try out *what ifs* by taking characters and situations out of narrative settings and into the world of imagination and play,

> …children place things in new contexts in order to find out what sort of things they are, and relive experiences under control conditions in order to find out how they feel about them. These cognitive and affective, self-expressive and even cathartic roles of play link it with roles that have traditionally been ascribed to narrative fictions (as well as to many other forms of cultural activity). (Sarland, 1985, p. 105)

Ultimately, "…an engaging text stays with the reader as experience gained" (Wyile, 1999, p. 192) and this type of experience helps support the child as there are no repercussions,

> …the vicarious experiences of reading and dramatic play are less threatening to one's ego than the reality of everyday life. Moreover, they are reversible. The readers can reflect for weeks upon the action taken by main characters and continue to come up with a myriad of actions that might also have been taken. And in fiction, as opposed to real life, no one sits in judgment of the readers' decisions. (Cecil & Roberts, 1992, p. xii)

The process of identification, defined as a psychological process "by which a person ascribes to himself the qualities or characteristics of another person" (Wyile, 1991, p.195), with characters in the books is described by Norton (1991) as being "…the most important for socialization. It requires emotional ties with models. Children's thoughts, feelings, and actions become similar to

those of people they believe are like them" (p. 25) and can help children experiment with social behaviour:

> Through the expressions of their attachments, they are also deeply engaged in the social relations found in the stories themselves. The children respond in delight and fear to the evolving relationships of the story characters. They try on the various character roles, taking as their own the relationships of those characters. Finally, by transporting familiar characters into new situations and different worlds, the children test and forge these relationships in a multitude of social spaces. (Alexander et al., 2001, p. 392)

Furthermore "…by giving an experience a recognizable (and sometimes repetitive) structure, children's fiction can work to help the listener [or reader] recall personal experiences" (Crawley, 2009, p. 37), which in turn helps situate the reader within the text via the construction of inferences and secondary memory, which is discussed later in this section of the chapter.

Narrative and reading. The functions of textual narrative vary depending on whether narrative is created or consumed, and whether it is narrative fiction or non-fiction. If the narrative is non-fiction and created by a child, for example, the explanation of its function in the research literature rests primarily within the discipline of psychology and sociology, and is seen as a means to convey the child's journey of making meaning or sense of the surrounding world:

> Through narrative [non-fiction], the meaning of experience is reorganized and reconstructed, both for an individual child and in relationship to other children. By encouraging the telling of their stories, we encourage reflection on experience, and refraction of significant parts so that it can be better understood, remembered and shared. The stories we tell are who we are and what we will become. (Ahn & Filipenko, 2007, p. 288)

This form of narrative is mainly autobiographical and can be used as a therapeutic strategy, e.g., scriptotherapy, to help children overcome stressful situations such as divorce, death in family, abuse, etc. By having the child verbalize emotions and impressions, either via drawing, writing or orating, internal and individual contexts are externalized and made to take a concrete form for analysis by the child and others, such as caregivers, health practitioners, etc. The counterpart for reading therapy would be *bibliotherapy* recognized to be "[t]he use of story as an agent of socialization is a conscious and deliberate process. In practice it ranges from the didactic extremes of 'bibliotherapy,' books which purport to help children confront and deal with specific problems in their lives (death of a close relative; parental separation; starting at school, etc.), to books with no obvious intent to be exemplary" (Stephens, 1992, p. 9).When narrative non-fiction and fiction is consumed, by seeing, listening, or reading, then one of the dominant research foci rests in the realm of reader-response theory. At its most basic level:

> The most important thing about a story is that by relating people, actions, objects, place, and time, the storyteller conveys meaning. Part of that meaning is conveyed by the story's perspective or point of view….In children's stories particularly, where sequence and plot are not always clearly developed, the key to understanding, appreciating, and responding to the story often lies in understanding the meaning, the perspective of the narrator. (Engel, 1995, p. 18)

What makes it difficult in narrative fiction, however, is to ascertain the true perspective of the narrator, who is usually equated with either the voice of the real author (actual writer) or implied author (a construct conveyed via the narrative). This is because besides the narrator(s), or author(s), there also exists a narrating subject, which is usually the voice of a character in the story who cannot be equated with the voice of the author:

> ...there is a distinction between the 'narrating subject' and the 'subject of narration.' The narrating subject means the narrator, who is either anonymous (the 'omnipotent' narrator) or one of the characters. The subject of narration is often an actual character in the story...This character provides the point of view through which the reader [narratee] sees things, other characters and events and so on, in the story...Thus, the subject of narration, the character, is 'narrated' by the narrator at the same time as the character seems to narrate his/her own story...the narration presents an image of the character (which is called the narrated subject) as signified by the name of the character (the signifier). (Netley, 1992, p. 197)

Netley (1992) defines the realm of affect within the relationship between narrator and reader by breaking it down into units of significance. These units would be consciously structured by the author to create coherence and stimulate the reader: "...we could usefully consider associative semantic fields as the cohesive feature in children's literature, each field activated or given direction by significant single stimuli" (Hunt, 1985, p. 117). The reader is thus led through the story, as it were, by the semantic fields, which are units of significance and this process would appear to represent a linear reading of a text. However, the research literature into reader-response theory acknowledges, that, "[n]ot only do we not read sequentially, but our concept of text is perpetually being revised" (Hunt, 1985, p. 120).

The constant revising on the part of the actual reader stems from the interplay between what is expected of the implied reader and what the actual reader experiences. Much like the implied author is a construct created by the reader via the narrative, the implied reader is a construct created by the author and can be likened to a mold, which the actual reader is expected to assume to be able to be fully engaged by the story created by the narrative. The constant and

often subconscious and instantaneous interplay created by absorbing new meaning from reading and combining it with already existing meaning, in the form of secondary memory, in the mind of the reader is what helps shape the reader's meaning making. However, the reader is not a vacuum waiting to be filled with the meaning created by a narrative, but instead has already an existing and ever-expanding repository of a multitude of experiences. This repository consists of a variety of accumulated knowledge, listed by Hunt (1991) as follows,

> as a reader, you bring to books
>
> - your attitude to books
> - your attitude to life
> - your knowledge and experience of books
> - your knowledge and experience of life
> - your cultural background and prejudices
> - your race, class, age, and sex attitudes
>
> And innumerable other minutiae of personality, background, and upbringing. These will all affect the way in which we make meaning: what we understand and what we take to be important. (p. 70),

All these types of knowledge are sometimes also collectively referred to as *world knowledge* in the research literature. This world knowledge has the capacity to either sustain or interfere with the expected implied reader mold,

> [i]f what the reader gets from the text depends on the questions he addresses to it, then these questions derive initially from expectations which are aroused before he encounters the text…[A]s soon as he is able to read silently, his perceptual activity is bound up with speculations about the meaning of text: he receives the graphic information from the

> page, not into a vacuum but into a set of expectations, which he must modify if the information does not fit. (Hatt as cited in Hunt, 1991, p. 99)

Furthermore, a reader's expectations are conceptual entities, rather than linguistic ones, and they generally enable the action of inference by the reader into a given text –

> An inference is a reasoned conclusion derived from understated information. Coherence assumptions lead to coherence-based inferences. This group of inferences carries information about protagonists, intention, causation, temporality, and spatiality. Explanation assumptions lead to explanation-based inferences. This group of inferences carries information about events, why they occur and how they relate. Readers generate both groups of inferences intentionally, either consciously or unconsciously. (Philpot, 2005, p. 150)

Using Hunt's explanation of the existence of semantic fields in the narrative which are activated by significant stimuli and combining it with the idea that there exist gaps in the narrative, "…which the reader must fill before meaning can be complete…" (Chambers as cited in Stephens, 1992, p. 10), these stimuli, which already exist within the reader and could be based upon intertextuality, would activate the process of inference, triggering the process of the construction of meaning of the text for the reader. Intertextuality, as defined by Stephens (1992) is:

> The production of meaning from the interrelationships between audience, text, other texts, and the socio-cultural determinations of significance, is a process which may be conveniently summed up in the term intertextuality. Further, no text exists in isolation from other texts, and from their conventions and genres. In the sense, then, that all texts inhabit an intertextual space, intertextuality is analogous to the intersubjectivity which

> human individuals experience in their day-to-day existence and which gives shape and purpose to individual subjectivity. (p. 84)

The fit between the mold of the implied reader and the pre-existing world knowledge of the actual reader, therefore, can be said to define how much a reader is engaged by a text. According to Wyile (1999), there are three levels of reader engagement: full, partial, and non- or disengagement:

> Full engagement means that one is riveted from beginning to end. Partial means that one is engaged some of the time; it is the 'fence-sitter's' category. Nonengagement is the passive description and simply suggests a complete lack of interest. When the lack of interest is active, due to a resistant reading caused by repulsion, refusal, or rejection, all of which amount to a kind of negative interest, then this active disinterest is disengagement. (p. 198)

The level of reader engagement is also influenced by the way the reader is addressed by the narrative itself, "Active narration refers to the use of direct address; the implied reader is repeatedly (though intermittently) reminded of his or her role as reader/listener/narratee....Active narration has the effect of drawing readers' attention to the fact of their reading while demanding a response to what they have just been told" (Wyile, 1999, p. 198). It is this experience of becoming actively involved in the narrative as an active reader, which when added to previous experiences already deposited in the reader's world knowledge repository, helps to strengthen or dispel previously held notions about how the world, as presented by the narrative, works. Since this knowledge is most likely partially contextualized and fragmentary, the construction of meaning via the use of intertextuality and world knowledge can be likened to reading with a

kaleidoscopic lens, as expectations, conclusions, etc., are constantly created, discarded and shifted into new patterns and formulations of meaning making.

Narrative as meaning-making. Narratives, both created and consumed, play an important part in how children create meaning around them:

> [C]hildren's worlds are filled with diverse narratives they both hear and tell. Children's narratives not only represent experience, as they know it to be, but also represent experience, as they would like it to be. Narrative is an essential form through which children describe their own experiences and communicate their views of the world. Through their narrative activities, children are not only able to represent their understanding of the world, but also to make sense of it both factually and emotionally and to find their place in it. (Nicolopoulou as cited in Ahn & Filipenko, 2007, p. 279)

The creation of narrative has been linked to the formation and affirmation of self-identity within the discipline of personality psychology, which states:

> a) Identity in adulthood takes the shape of a coherent narrative or life story that integrates interpretations of the past with the present self and provides life with meaning and purpose, and
>
> b) The processes of constructing, revising, and living in accordance with this narrative identity over time are central to personality functioning, development, and well-being. (McAdams (2001), Singer (2004), Singer & Blagov (2004), as cited in Pals, 2006, p. 1080)

It is the contention of the researcher that this process of forming and establishing self-identity, whether coherent or incoherent, does not begin with adulthood, which in itself is a socially created construct, but begins as soon as the child comes to realize that he or she is a

separate and individual being. When this process is conducted via created narratives, it is termed to be *exploratory narrative processing* and is closely associated with the pathway of personality development towards maturity, defined in the research literature as "the path towards increasing complexity, self-understanding, wisdom, inner growth, and emotional sophistication" (Pals, 2006, p. 1083). Pals (2006) defines this term as "the active, engaged effort on the part of the narrator to explore, reflect on, or analyze a difficult experience with an openness to learning from it and incorporating a sense of change into the life story" (p. 1081). Stott (1994) provides a further concise summary of the interrelationship between reading stories and creating stories for children:

> In reading the stories, in understanding them and responding actively to them, children are not only developing their literary competencies, they are also fulfilling their need for narratives that better help give shape and meaning to their own lives as individuals and members of their communities. (p. 252)

Bruner (2004) adds the cultural element to this interrelationship by stating, "…the tool kit of any culture is replete not only with a stock of canonical life narratives… but with combinable formal constituents from which its members can construct their own life narratives: canonical stances and circumstances, as it were" (p. 694), explaining how human beings can see their own lives as narratives.

In response to the question stated at the beginning of this section, given the overt didactic nature of children's literature to socialize the child into the world of the adult, children learn about their culture via narratives. Narratives therefore serve at minimum a dual function for children: providing them with entertainment while simultaneously providing instruction about how the world works. The child reader however is not a passive recipient of this instruction, but

rather uses this instruction in conjunction with accumulated world knowledge to help further his or her sense of identity.

Is there a Link between Reading Narratives and Resilience?

This is the second guiding research sub-question that is posed and examined further in the following sections. A definition of resilience is followed by a discussion of resilience as it is regarded in and relates to the fields of human development, culture and narrative to present an initial overview of how these concepts can be viewed to interact and react to and with each other.

Definition of resilience. According to Masten (2009), "[t]he study of resilience emerged about forty years ago when a group of scientists studying the origins of behaviour problems and mental illness were surprised to find that many children in 'high risk' groups were developing well" (p. 28). Henderson and Milstein (1996) define resilience "as the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social, academic, and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply to the stress inherent in today's world" (as cited in Lewis, 1999, p. 201).

In the realm of psychology, resilience and its stabilizing effect is primarily studied within the construct of personality since,

> Personality is a stable set of characteristics and tendencies that determine those commonalities and differences in the psychological behaviour (thoughts, feelings, and actions) of people that have continuity in time and that may not be easily understood as the sole result of the social and biological pressures of the moment. (Maddi as cited in Shiner, 2000, p. 312)

Furthermore, "…personality is relatively stable, yet emergent and malleable…" (Bromley, 2005, p. 397), and since, "[r]esiliency can be an intricate and individualized process…" (Bromley,

2005, p. 402), the notion of ego-resilience (ER) has found wide attention. Block and Block (1980) defined ego-resilience (ER) as

> …resourceful adaptation to changing circumstances and environmental contingencies, analysis of the "goodness of fit" between situational demands and behavioural possibility, and flexible invocation of the available repertoire of problem-solving strategies (problem-solving being defined to include the social and personal domains as well as the cognitive). The opposite end of the ego-resiliency continuum (ego-brittleness) implies little adaptive flexibility, an inability to respond to the dynamic requirements of the situation, a tendency to perseverate or to become disorganized when encountering changed circumstances or when under stress, and a difficulty in recouping after traumatic experiences (as cited in Klohnen, 1996, p. 1067)

Ego-resilience is grounded within the context of personality development and has been used to isolate defining characteristics of resilient individuals:

> ...ER is a broad and superordinate construct that combines a number of distinct personality attributes. In particular, ego-resilient individuals have a sense of active and meaningful engagement with the world. Their positive and energetic approach to life is grounded in confident, autonomous, and competent functioning and a sense of mastery within a wide range of life domains. In addition, ego-resilient individuals are perceptive and insightful and have the capacity for warm and open relations with others. They also possess the necessary interpersonal skills and social poise to effectively negotiate the social world. (as cited in Klohnen, 1996, p. 1075)

Additionally, "[s]ociability, self-efficacy, and a sense of meaning appear to be common attributes of resilient people. These attributes seem to benefit individuals over time and despite

hardships" (Bromley, 2005, p. 389) and would act as a buffer in stressful situations for an individual (Bromley, 2005, pp. 392-393).

The concept of resilience is multi-faceted and has therefore been described, as "… a trait, a process and an outcome" (Bromley, 2005, p. 398), dependent upon individual circumstances and social contexts. More recently, resilience has been defined as a "construct," in recognition of the fact that individual factors, coupled with social relationships and communal experiences, either create and sustain, or dismantle those protective factors, as defined in the introduction of this section, necessary for optimum youth development (CCL, 2009, p. 17).

Resilience and human development. According to Humphrey (2008), "resiliency is a normal part of human development; our innate capacity to thrive in spite of adversity is a built-in coping system" (p. ix). Recent research in neuroscience has discovered that the brain is able to change throughout the lifetime of a human being, supporting plasticity via continual generation of new cells and pathways, which in turn is based on learning and repeated experiences, including treatment (CCL, 2009; Dehaene, 2009; Doidge, 2007; Humphrey, 2008). This plasticity, in turn, positively affects the notion of resilience, as, "[r]esilient behaviour can therefore be learned at all stages" (CCL, 2009, Executive Summary), which makes the acquisition of positive characteristics and coping skills an ongoing possibility into adulthood.

The construction of resilient behaviour is shaped by a variety of factors, both internal and external to the individual: "Young people's resilience is determined by the interplay of individual characteristics, the characteristics of the families within which they live, and the characteristics of their physical and social environments" (Barankin & Khanlou, 2007, p.12). On the internal individual level, research has identified certain commonalities in personality traits for stress-resilient children:

> Stress-resilient children consistently exceed stress-affected children on measures of interpersonal attributes, including warmth, empathy, poise, emotional perceptiveness, and communication skills. Flexibility and friendly compliance are important, as are extraversion, and expressiveness. (Bromley, 2005, p. 394)

Relating these personality traits back to the concept of ego-resilience discussed in the previous section of this chapter, Klohnen (1996) draws parallels between these traits and their behavioural outcomes:

> The temperamental and personality attributes consistently found to be associated with stress resistance in children are reflectiveness when confronted with new situations, cognitive skills, activity level, and positive responsiveness to others. These attributes are consistent with some of the behavioural implications the Blocks associated with ER, such as resourcefulness and integrated performance under stress, adaptive flexibility, active engagement with the world, and an available repertoire of problem-solving strategies within the social, personal and cognitive domains." (p. 1068)

Cognition also plays a vital part in human development as it "refers to the changes that occur in children's mental skills and abilities over time… We are constantly attending to objects and events, interpreting them, comparing them with past experiences, placing them into categories, and encoding them into memory" (Shaffer, 1989, p. 306). More specifically, Mussen, Conger, and Kagan (1989) explain how cognition touches upon the following actions and processes:

(1) perception – the detection, organization, and interpretation of information from both the outside world and the internal environment,

(2) memory – the storage and retrieval of the perceived information,

(3) reasoning – the use of knowledge to make inferences and draw conclusions,

(4) reflection – the evaluation of the quality of ideas and solutions, and

(5) insight – the recognition of new relationships between two or more segments of knowledge. (pp. 234-235)

Cognition works on the level of the individual and all five processes can be applied to various stages of a child's development as they build upon one another to create meaning out of gathered knowledge. These five stages could also be said to summarize the process by which a child reader engages while reading narratives, describing an active engagement with the text as outlined previously. Therefore, cognition effectively describes the internal processes that culminate in external behaviours.

In addition, Vygotsky's observations on cultural habits of behaviour as a psychological function, and of behaviours as learned structures themselves, explains that behaviours are malleable and bi-directional during the child's development:

> It [the behaviour] originates in conformance with definite laws at a certain stage of the natural development of the child. It cannot be forced on the child from outside, it always originates inwardly, although it is modeled by the deciding influence of external problems with which the child is faced, and the external signs with which it operates. After the structure comes into being, it does not remain unchanged, but is subject to a lengthy internal change which shows all the signs of development. (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 62)

Learned behaviours can be directly linked to the concepts of plasticity and resilience within the sphere of adaptive systems that are continually at work during everyday lives. According to Engel (1995) everyday behaviour is regulated by mental *scripts*:

> …we construct specific organizational frameworks to guide our everyday functioning. They [Robert Schank and Robert Abelson] called these frameworks scripts, and suggested that we use mental scripts, rather than abstract categories, to get a grip on the flow of experience. We organize our expectations about events and our actions within those events, around central goals. Within these goal-defined scripts we see things in terms of actors, locations, actions, and time…children experience their day as a series of scripts, or routines; they use those routines to understand how the world works, what is going to happen when, and who is going to do what. (p. 29)

Even though these behavioural structures are created internally, their stimuli and carrying-through are found in the external environment of the child. How the outcomes of behavioural structures are experienced influences the internal behavioural structuring for the next encounter with and response to external stimuli:

> By being exposed to various learning environments, young people develop awareness, imagination, know-how and initiative. They learn how to handle a variety of social situations and interact with different kinds of people. They are challenged to handle problems, learn from experience and continue to grow. They develop the ability to come up with more than one solution to solving a problem. They also learn to think about past negative experiences in ways that allow them to define the experience and move beyond it. In other words, they develop resilience. (Barankin & Khanlou, 2007, p. 25)

New patterns of behavioural structures are thus created, and if the experience was positive, then this positivity would be further incorporated into the adaptive system and strengthen its role as a protective factor. Vygotsky relates this concept back to human development and describes it as a

process of creating a tool-set for any future action in the broadest sense and any future behaviour, specifically stating:

> …the effect of social experience [is] in the fact that the child through imitation and the application of tools or objects, following a given pattern, develops not only ready-made stereotype modes of action, but learns to master the very principle involved in the given activity…The final result is a crystallized scheme, a defined principle of activity. As it becomes more experienced, the child acquires a greater number of models of what it understands. These models represent, as it were, a refined cumulative design of all similar-type previous actions; at the same time, they are also a rough blueprint for possible types of action in the future. (Vygotsky & Luria, 1994, p. 104)

Within the social context and relating the concept of resilience to the broader context of human development from childhood to adulthood, importance is placed on the notion of attachment. In very general terms,

> [e]xtra familial support – social groups, supportive adults, or community ties – also assist the developing child. In several studies, children who identify mentors are less likely to have poor psychosocial and psychiatric outcomes. They show better school adaptation, better relationship with peers, and higher levels of esteem and self-understanding than children without mentors. (Bromley, 2005, p. 395)

A link can be made here between narratives as mentors since anecdotal evidence suggests that some adults found the necessary extra familial support in books, not living human beings, which enabled them to grow into confident adults.

The Final Report stemming from the *National Dialogue on Resilience in Youth* held in November 2008 in Manitoba, Canada and entitled *From Risk to Resilience* (2009), has identified

that a variation of the gene 5-HTT can protect against the negative effects of adverse experience and that this gene is only triggered by bad experiences (CCL, 2009, p. 7). A genetic link between experience and resultant behaviour was already identified by Vygotsky in 1929:

> A new method of behaviour does not simply remain fixed as a certain external habit. It has its internal history. It is included in the general process of the development of a child's behaviour, and we therefore have a right to talk of a genetic relation between certain structures of cultural reasoning and behaviour, and of the development of the methods of behaviour. This development is certainly of a special kind, is radically different from the organic development and has its own definite laws. It is extremely difficult to grasp and express precisely the peculiarity of that type of development. (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 62)

What is new in the current literature on child development is that the emphasis is being placed on ensuring that a child is touched by nurturing attachments, "…caring relationships are the most important protective factors and they help children gain the skills and mastery necessary to meet their potential" (CCL, 2009, p. 9). The focus has shifted away from the individual and is placed on the type of interaction between the child and ideally, a parent or caregiver, as these relationships have a direct influence on the child's adaptive systems and thus strengthen or weaken protective factors. Hypothetically speaking, the more a child is surrounded by positive protective factors and positive relationships and for longer sustained periods of time, the better the outcome when that child is faced with adversity. Thus this thesis views the reading of narratives as being akin to a positive protective factor creating positive relationships for the child reader via the attachment to the narrative, either through the act of reading or the narrative itself.

The last realm of influence on creating and sustaining protective factors for resilience to flourish is that of the social environment surrounding the individual, which is typically a wider community of individuals. The environment is an important consideration when discussing personality traits and resilience as it acts upon the individual whose outward behaviour is either an action or reaction precipitated by some external stimuli in the environment: "In interactional continuity, individuals' personalities evoke particular responses from others, which then enhance the links between those personality traits and their adaptive outcomes over time" (Shiner, 2000, p. 323).

Resilience is based within each individual human being and such a great diversity of data exists from ongoing research, that it is difficult to identify a single process, which ensures the same protective level of resilience in everyone, even though, "…much more has been learned about the timing of these factors and the different ways they may work in the lives of children of different ages, situations, and domains of function. The same factor, for example, may work in different ways for different ages of children or different aspects of competence" (Masten, 2009, p. 29). More important is the recognition that, "…resilience does not require extraordinary resources in most cases,…[but rather] the multiplicity of adaptive systems – which is likely the result of many thousands of years of biological and cultural evolution – [and] accounts for the diversity across individuals and also explains the many different pathways to resilience" (Masten, 2009, p. 30). With this in mind, one of the main hypotheses of this thesis is that reading narratives can be said to play an important part in the creation of a positive adaptive system for a child reader because of the transforming nature of being engaged with a text, either via the act of reading or the narrative itself.

Resilience and culture. Taking Swidler's (1986) definition of culture's causal significances, which,

> a) offers an image of a culture as a 'tool kit' of symbols, stories, rituals and world views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems;
>
> b) focuses on 'strategies of action,' persistent ways of ordering action through time; and
>
> c) provides cultural components that are used to construct strategies of action. (p. 273),

a link between resilience and culture can be established via the notion of tools or strategies of action. More significant is Swidler's (1986) observation that,

> Within established modes of life, culture provides a repertoire of capacities from which varying strategies of action may be constructed…Indeed, a culture has enduring effects on those who hold it, not by shaping the ends they pursue, but by providing the characteristic repertoire from which they build lines of action. (p. 284)

This statement suggests that culture actually provides the scaffold for the creation of strategies of action by individuals in a cultural community. Swidler goes on to differentiate between the notions of *settled* and *unsettled* lives and proceeds to discuss the effects of the presence of cultures in both instances:

> In one case, culture accounts for continuities in 'settled lives.' In settled lives, culture is intimately integrated with action; it is here that we are most tempted to see values as organizing and anchoring patterns of action; and here it is most difficult to disentangle what is uniquely 'culture,' since culture and structural circumstance seem to reinforce each other....The second case is that of 'unsettled lives.' The distinction is less between

> settled and unsettled lives, however, than between culture's role in sustaining existing strategies of action and its role in construing new ones. (Swidler, 1986, p. 278)

While Swidler applies these concepts to a community at a macro-level, her conclusions are equally applicable on the micro-level of the individual, where the terms *settled* and *unsettled* could be replaced with *stress-free* and *stress-full* respectively since the reasoning behind a specific application of culturally-mediated strategies of action would be similar. A further important consideration at the level of the individual is her observation that, "[c]ulture provides resources for constructing organized strategies of action. Particular cultural resources can be integrated, however, into quite different strategies of action" (Swidler, 1986, p. 283).

Bruner (1986) is more explicit in linking culture and development by stating, "[h]uman culture simply provides *ways* of development among the many that are made possible by our plastic genetic inheritance. Those ways are prescriptions about the canonical course of human growth" (p. 135). These ways can be viewed as enabling the strategies of action, which are also flexible and malleable, leading to resulting behaviours of adaptive systems described in the realm of human development and which are vital for the creation of pathways to resilience. Likewise, the learning of new behaviour in the realm of human development can be equated with a patterning of strategies of action in a new formulation:

> People do not readily take advantage of new structural opportunities, which would require them to abandon established ways of life. This is not because they cling to cultural values, but because they are reluctant to abandon familiar strategies of action for which they have cultural equipment... (Swidler, 1986, p. 281)

Change challenges the adaptive system of the individual, but is very important in human development as it allows the individual to grow through new experiences, both positive and

negative. This process is described by Swidler (1986) as, "[w]hen people are learning new ways of organizing individual and collective action, practicing unfamiliar habits until they become familiar, then doctrine, symbols, and ritual directly shape action" (p. 278). In the realm of human development, the careful structuring of new experiences by adults shapes the experience of the child in such a manner that they are able to eventually master a set task, etc.: "…more capable participants structure interactions so that novices (children) can participate in activities that they are not themselves capable of; with repeated practice, children gradually increase their relative responsibility until they can manage the adult role" (Cole, 1985, p. 155). Positive reinforcement encourages the continued striving for mastery and this notion of *mastery motivation* defined by Masten (2009) as "experiencing pleasure in agency, or being effective in the world" (p. 30), relates directly back to creating and sustaining resilience as it is an identified protective factor.

Resilience and narrative. To further support the hypothesis that reading narratives can be deemed to be a protective factor strengthening resilience, one significant view presented in the research literature suggests that an individual's self-determined action plays a vital role in sustaining resilience. Having already discussed culture as a tool kit and reading as an engaged experience, it could be said that strategies of action to which a reader is exposed via the culture's toolkit in a narrative would be internalized by the reader, to be stored for appropriate use as an action at a later time. It is this process leading from exposure to a strategy of action to an actual action that would define a supporting relationship for resilience.

Engagement with narrative can be viewed as helping shape the "internal locus of control," (Bromley, 2005, p. 393) and as such the engagement with narrative could be considered a point of reference. In the context of this thesis, *point of reference* is defined as a stabilizing framework for activities specific to an individual. Both the act of reading itself and the

engagement with text-based narratives can be said to provide a framework for an individual as the reader could internalize the behaviour modeled in the narrative. With this internalization the modeled behaviour would become a point of reference which the reader could call upon as needed. As these points reside within each individual who is surrounded by and relies on various points of references every day, they would determine and influence how the individual could act in any given situation.

Reviewing the relationship between individual and narrative, it is the engagement of the reader's mind and imagination, which helps the reader visualize the text and helps shape an experience which lasts beyond the actual act of reading a text. This engagement is further fueled by the reader's comprehension of the text. Philpot (2005) summarizes the various levels of reading comprehension in great detail as follows:

> Readers of narrative fiction construct mental representations of the texts they read. These mental representations are called *situation models*. Comprehension represented at the level of *situation model* is deeper and more durable than comprehension represented at either levels of *surface code* or *textbase*. At the level of surface code mental representations preserve the exact wording and syntax of the text and fade within a minute; at the level of *textbase* mental representations preserve explicit textual propositions, less detailed than the surface code, and fade within an hour. Situation models include not only the chronological sequence of plot episodes, stored longest in memory, but also such details as particular narrator and character traits, spatial settings, individual action, objects, and object properties. (pp. 148-149)

Comprehension of a narrative text is therefore multi-layered, leading to multiple interpretations depending on what the reader brings to the text. However, the author's intentions in relation to

the creation and maintenance of these levels, and specifically the situation models for the reader, should not be overlooked, as the author as the creator of the text is ultimately the initiator,

> …psychic reality dominates narrative and any reality that exists beyond the awareness of those involved in the story is put there by the author with the object of creating dramatic effect. Indeed, it is an invention of modern novelists and playwrights to create a world made up entirely of the psychic realities of the protagonists, leaving knowledge of the "real" world in the realm of the implicit. (Bruner, 1986, p. 14)

The reader therefore weaves together the world created within the narrative, as mentally visualized by the reader, along with the various bits of previous internalized world knowledge and secondary memory, which are activated by the narrative within the reader to create a personalized meaning from the text. According to DiMaggio (1997), personalized meaning is

> …meaning as emerging from the relations of words to one another in speech and to activities in real time. Because these constantly change, meanings are rarely fixed, but instead, adapt, diverge, and spread across domains through semantic contagion. This perspective is particularly attractive because it acknowledges endemic change in language and other symbol systems and because it embeds generalization in social interaction. (p. 282)

As this is done on the internal, psychological, and physiological levels, these processes are very difficult to ascertain and measure. However, it can be stated that "[n]arrative deals with the vicissitudes of human intentions" (Bruner, 1986, p. 15), and since the subject-matter of the narrative can be said to reflect that which is possible, narratives can be regarded as providing concrete examples of a variety of human behaviours and their consequences,

> For stories define the range of canonical characters, the settings in which they operate, the actions that are permissible and comprehensible. And thereby they provide, so to speak, a map of possible roles and of possible worlds in which action, thought and self-definition are permissible (or desirable). (Bruner, 1986, p. 66)

Narrative can therefore be described as an instruction booklet for social behavioural tools, and since a narrative is a cultural product, the instructions and tools themselves are acculturated accordingly. One should therefore "[c]onsider[ing] each separate text as a cultural tool, one that provides access to human voices, debates, and ideologies, [and] it is easy to see the profound way in which texts as tools shape memory, thinking, and doing; human processes that are themselves not so easy to separate" (Vadeboncoeur, 2003, p. 391).

Building on the idea of children's literature as a socializing and entertaining agent, Richardson and Eccles (2007) and Vadeboncoeur (2003) attempt to explain the transformative power of narrative by stating that engagement with narrative supports and strengthens the development of the reader's sense of self, both as an individual and within a social community (Richardson & Eccles, 2007, p. 344; Vadeboncoeur, 2003, p. 387) and "…while narrative is a mode of representation, it is, at the same time, a mode of action. We use narrative to guide and shape the way we experience our daily lives, to communicate with other people, and to develop relationships with them" (Ahn & Filipenko, 2007, p. 287). Bruner (1986) takes the notion of narrative as being an agent of action in the realm of interpersonal communication further by explaining that,

> …[a] story must construct two landscapes simultaneously. One is the landscape of action, where constituents are the arguments of action: agent, intention or goal, situation, instrument,…The other landscape is the landscape of consciousness: what those involved

> in the action now, think, or feel, or do not know, think or feel. The two landscapes are essential and distinct… (p. 14)

Furthermore, "[t]o adopt a line of conduct, one needs an image of the kind of world in which one is trying to act, a sense that one can read reasonably accurately (through one's own feelings and through the responses of others) how one is doing, and a capacity to choose among alternative lines of action" (Swidler, 1986, p. 275). The landscapes created by narrative can be safely explored as it were, as consequences of actions in these landscapes would not have any effects in the real world. The reader is thus said to be living vicariously through the actions of the characters in the narrative, and this "[t]he roles we play in living through the story are the rehearsal for future coping" (Gold, 2001, p. 142).

To further illustrate the conscious application of this type of narrative strategy in children's literature, Gooderham (1997) has identified four specific types of narrative relationships defined by the adult world, which would inform what kind of material should be written for a child:

> Child reader is deficient in understanding and inferior in status to the adult – texts are for socialization of child, i.e., moral literature – relationship of control "The text not only tells readers what they should know, but also just how they should feel and consequently just how they should behave."
>
> Child reader has different, not necessarily inferior experience from that of the adult. – texts are to cultivate intellectual and moral growth – educative relationship "a consistent belief in the distinctiveness of the child's world and respect for it, and concomitant belief in the exercise and development of the child-reader's intellect,

> imagination and judgment as the educational means to adult knowledge, belief and values."
>
> Child is treated as an equal – egalitarian relationship "mainly fantasy texts" – "Texts deploying those narrative strategies contribute to children's developing cognitive competence, and not only speak to their present condition, but function as aids in growing up. Although they are children's texts, they are orientated away from childhood towards adult life."
>
> The adult has to come to accept children whom he or she cannot label civilized, labeled as bad, evil – morally deficient. (p. 69)

While a case can be made that to base an author's narrative strategy on any one of these relationships, the relationships described in b) and c) would appear to be the most constructive and most useful in helping to identify the act of reading and all which this concept encompasses, as a point of reference for children which would, in turn, help in the sustaining of protective factors for resilience.

As touched upon briefly earlier, the concept of emotional attachment, whether creating them or letting go of them, is an integral one for resilience and important for normal human development (Masten, 2009, p. 30). These attachment relationships can be framed as a point of reference for enabling resilient behaviour. Even though the secondary literature stresses the importance of such relationships with live human beings, the fostering of emotional attachments with characters in narratives should also be supported. This would be especially useful for those children for whom reading could be framed as a point of reference, and as mentioned before, who do not have a nurturing adult in their immediate environment - "…children invested stories with the feelings that were attached to an important loved one which allowed the stories to

provide comfort for the children in the absence of the caregiver for whom the object was a stand-in" (Alexander et al., 2001, p. 376).

Finding a role model, who will turn into an "attachment figure" (CCL, 2009, p. 11) for these children becomes particularly crucial, and if they are able to find it within characters of a narrative of children's books, then this should be recognized as a vital resource and supported accordingly, regardless of the type of literature to which the child might be drawn. Books are already recognized to be a protective resource within the school environment (Masten, 2009), so to ensure children are encouraged and supported to use this resource as much as possible, it would be beneficial to extend support for this resource outside of school hours and structured reading time as well. Coupled with the observation that while every child matures at an individualized pace, there are key intervals in which positive interventions or reinforcements are more effective than at other times – "there also appear to be windows of opportunity in development where the leverage for change increases" (Masten, 2009, p. 31). It would therefore be prudent for caregivers, educators, mentors, etc., to continue to encourage and support reading as the child moves through the various stages of development to adulthood and beyond. Furthermore, emotional attachment must be present before exploratory narrative processing can begin since a safe and trusting environment has to be established before exploration can begin. The ensuing exploration can be used on the path to adulthood since "exploratory narrative processing may operate as a developmental mechanism through which the raw potential for maturity (or lack thereof) within one's traits gets translated into the developmental outcome of maturity as individuals navigate the ups and downs of adult life" (Pals, 2006, p. 1097). The idea of being able to scaffold the developmental pathway to maturity via structured use of narrative

processing, regardless if the narrative is created or consumed, would have great capacity for application in the realm of resilience, especially since Pals (2006) concludes,

> …because coherent positive resolution [which is part of narrative processing] promotes emotional closure and restores order and direction to the life story, the persistent lack of it could interfere with a person's capacity to cope with new challenges and lead to decreases in ego-resiliency over time. Second, if a person is able to narrate a difficult experience with coherent positive resolution, then the narrative of this particular experience may become an important self-defining memory within the life story that serves as an active reminder of being able to overcome adversity in life. (p. 1086)

While Pals (2006) refers to how created narrative can support resilience, it could be argued that the same type of positive result could be achieved via emotional attachment and narrative engagement with consumed narrative, since active engagement with the narrative would allow the reader to be able to regulate their behaviour depending on what kind of situation is being faced, which would be reflected in the actual actions of the individual. As Swidler (1986) explains: "[t]o adopt a line of conduct, one needs an image of the kind of world in which one is trying to act, a sense that one can read reasonably accurately (through one's own feelings and through the responses of others) how one is doing, and a capacity to choose among alternative lines of action" (p. 275), therefore once this image has been created, it is possible to act.

Summary

To address and answer the proposed research question and its two sub-questions, two reviews of interdisciplinary literature were completed. The first literature review consisted of 53 articles and/or books read more broadly into the concepts of culture, narrative, and resilience across disciplines. The second review consisted of 47 articles and/or books and further refined

and defined narrative inquiry as both a theory and a methodology. Additionally, terminology was synthesized from various disciplines such as psychology, sociology and human development, along with the fields of narrative studies, literary criticism, and the subfield of children's literature for the terms narrative and resilience. For instance, research from the disciplines of biology and neuroscience on cognitive effects of reading in relation to building resilience has discovered that the brain is able to change throughout the lifetime of a human being creating plasticity via continual generation of new cells and pathways, based on learning and repeated experiences, including treatment (CCL, 2009; Dehaene, 2009; Doidge, 2007; Humphrey, 2008). This plasticity, in turn, positively affects the notion of resilience, as, "[r]esilient behaviour can therefore be learned at all stages" (CCL, 2009, Executive Summary), which makes the acquisition of protective factors and positive characteristics an ongoing possibility into adulthood.

The next three chapters detail the research undertaken to ascertain whether reading narratives actually does have a protective adaptive effect aiding in the building of resilience strategies. The Methodology Chapter discusses narrative research as a suitable qualitative research methodology and discusses the procedures undertaken to gather data. The Results Chapter presents the detailed responses from both the child and adult participants along with both an intra- and interthematic analysis of the interview responses. And finally, the Discussion Chapter situates the research findings and their contribution within current literature in the field of cognitive psychology, education, library science and narrative studies.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents narrative inquiry as a valid qualitative research tool and provides a short literature review followed by an explanation of why narrative inquiry was chosen as the preferred method of data collection and analysis. This discussion is then followed by a comprehensive overview of ethical challenges and implications of the methodology along with descriptions of the procedures for the data collection, encompassing sample, research tools, rigour, and data analysis.

Narrative Inquiry as Methodology

A brief review of the literature. Narrative inquiry is an established and valuable research methodology. First and foremost, the literature surrounding 'narrative research' and 'narrative inquiry' does not differentiate between these two terms. 'Narrative research' and 'narrative inquiry' are used interchangeably in the literature as Trahar (2008) explains:

> …the range of terms used – 'narrative research,' 'narrative inquiry' and 'narrative analysis' – can be confusing. The term 'narrative inquiry' is gaining precedence in the literature, yet even this term is used interchangeably with the more generic 'narrative research.' 'Narrative inquiry embraces narrative as both the method and the phenomena of study. (p. 260)

Moen (2006) tries to classify whether or not narrative can be a research methodology when he states,

> Some researchers have focused on the narrative approach as a method of inquiry, a research genre situated within the qualitative or interpretive research family. Others have claimed that the narrative approach is not a method, but rather, a frame of reference in a

> research process, wherein narratives are seen as producers and transmitters of reality. (p. 2)

One can also discuss narrative as methodology according to whether the methodology concerns the analysis of narrative as research object, or the analysis of content and function of the narrative to answer research questions for which narratives are the primary data source. Chandler, Lalonde, and Teucher (2004), summarize this viewpoint in their discussion of Mishler's (1990) *Models of Narrative Analysis: A Typology*:

> The…approaches to narrative analyses lends itself to being rough-sorted into the following not altogether mutually exclusive bins, having to do, in turn, with the study of (1) narrative "*reference*"[1] (i.e., the relations between events, and their representation), (2) narrative "*structure*" or "textual coherence," and (3) narrative "*function*" (i.e., the work done by, or problem-solving function of, narrative strategies). On this account, most psychologists, along with other "life-scientists," most commonly employ brands of narrative analyses that qualify as instances of [the] *functional* model, by spelling out the kinds of work that narratives are thought to do, the settings in which they are produced, and the effects they are assumed to have. The analyses of narrative *structures*, by contrast, are more often the work of literary scholars, who commonly focus their attention on matters of textualization, including explorations of the poetics of narratives. (p. 253)

In this quote the disciplinary divide is once again evident between how narrative as methodology is viewed in the humanities (theory and analysis of narrative structures by literary scholars) and the social sciences (theory and analysis of narrative reference and function). Thus, in the same

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[1] Italics in this and subsequent quotes are presented as in the original source material.

way that narrative as theory aligns crudely with disciplinary viewpoints on what constitutes narrative, narrative as methodology aligns with the various disciplinary ways narratives are collected and analyzed. Once again, there exists in the research literature an ambiguity about how to definitively define narrative as methodology as explained by Overcash (2003),

> Narrative can be the methods employed to obtain data, or the narrative can be the result of the analysis of telling an experience in its entirety with great detail. There is a degree of ambiguity that exists in definitions related to narrative methods. (p. 180)

However, according to Aktinson, Delamond, and Housley (2008), "[t]he fact that narratives demonstrably have characteristic forms and functions makes them especially amenable to sustained, disciplined analysis" (p. 115), make narratives units of data. It must be noted here that narratives have recently become valid sources of data within the social sciences with the 'narrative turn' as described by Stalker (2009),

> … [i]n the last twenty to thirty years we have seen a concerted shift in sociology, not only to the necessity of qualitative methodologies, but to ones that recognize the importance of narrative to our understanding of the social worlds we wish to grasp. (p. 221)

And this narrative turn has placed, "…a renewed emphasis on the significance of life histories, biographies and autobiographies, personal testimonies, and the like" (Atkinson, Delamont, & Housley, 2008, p. 94).

In contrast to the situation in the social sciences, narratives have been recognized as significant sources of data within the humanities longer than in the social sciences (Clandinin, 2006), so the narrative turn in the early 1980s in the social sciences can be seen as a validation of the contribution of narrative to research since it is now accepted that, "Stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with

real problems. They banish the indifference often generated by samples, treatments, and faceless subjects" (Dhunpath, 2000, p. 547).

Narrative as method involves first the collection of data and then the analysis or interpretation of the collected data. Narrative as method is therefore not equivalent to narrative analysis, as it encompasses both the method of collecting and the methods for analyzing narratives. Hollingsworth and Dybdahl (2007) suggest clustering methods for narrative research "...into two categories: (1) performative/generative methods of eliciting conversational narratives and (2) structural/analytical methods of making sense of the transcribed conversations" (p. 149).

How can narrative be classified as a method? Runyan (1984) describes how using narrative as method helps gather this insight in people's experience by focusing on their surroundings,

> In attending to the particularities of thought, conversation, actions, subjective meanings, and social contexts, narrative qualifies as an idiographic method *par excellence*. The utility of the narrative method for representing individuals in their environments is reflected in its extensive use in biography, psychobiography, and clinical case studies. (p. 182)

Not surprisingly, the literature itself is ambiguous about whether or not there exists a single method of narrative. Bowman (2006) asks, "Is there, or should there be, a "method" for narrative inquiry? I'm inclined to say no: first, because it is not a single orientation, and shouldn't be, and second, because its situatedness and particularity are the very antithesis of method's generality" (p. 12). In contrast to the emphasis on the broad nature of narrative and the unwillingness to have it conform to empirical research methods, Hendry (2007) presents the opposing view by offering this sobering reflection, "Narrative has become reduced to methods, verification, validity, ways

in which we as researchers can legitimate it as a means of research that tells us something about the world" (p. 497). It is Overcash, (2003), who captures the broad nature of narrative method and its inherent possibilities for research into the human condition,

> The open-endedness of narrative research is the strength of the method …Narrative method lends itself to a global view of the human experience that may not only answer a research question, but reveal additional aspects of life not identified as the primary focus of the project. (p. 182)

One of the most common methods for collecting narrative data in such a way that it focuses attention on the situational context and emotional responses of the participant is in the narrative research interview. As Trahar (2008) explains,

> The narrative interview, a major way of gathering verbal narratives, may bear resemblance to broader definitions of semi-structured and unstructured interviews or it may be viewed as a collaborative activity, one in which the researcher shares the impact on her/him of the stories that are being told. (p. 260)

The narrative research interview can be described as a conversation creating a relationship between the participant and the researcher, providing a link between narrative research and ethnography, defined by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) as "...the most basic form of social research. Not only does it have a very long history, it also bears a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life" (p. 2). Hollingsworth and Dybdahl (2007) explain that "[m]ost narrative inquiries…emphasize the ethnographic nature of their studies – that is, staying together as participant-observers long enough to develop trust and intimacy to get the 'real stories'" (p. 157).

However, while the dynamics of the relationship building between participant and researcher in the interview process is very similar in narrative research and ethnographic research, narrative researchers see a divergence in how the researcher situates themselves in the written follow-up of the data collection and analysis. Instead, what can be agreed upon is the multi-layeredness of narratives lending themselves to be analyzed in a variety of ways. According to Maines (2006),

> Scholarly work on narrative cuts across nearly all theoretical approaches, from postmodernism to rhetorical analysis, communication theory, pragmatism, functionalism, structuralism, and hermeneutics, and it is evidenced in every field of the human sciences. Accordingly, this body of work is characterized by a very healthy heterogeneity which can be brought to bear on an enormous range of questions and problems. (p. 121)

Since narratives arise from the individual experiences from the narrators and are cultural and social as well as individual products, analysis of narratives can take many forms. Hardy, Gregory, and Ramjeet, (2009) describe one approach linking patterns to themes,

> Analysing narratives can involve searching for patterns in the narrative then clustering these based on the theoretical underpinning of the relevant literature. These clusters can then be considered in relation to the original research questions or line of inquiry. The researcher can use this to form hypotheses about the main topics identified….This can then take the process of analysis further, offering theoretical links from very specific and local content to a wider political context and consideration of historical and cultural themes, should the intent be to make links to a wider body of knowledge. (p. 15)

Searching for a recurrence of themes seems to be the most common analytic practice undertaken in narrative analysis in the belief that recurring themes within narratives express experiences,

universal to the participants, even if expressed in different words. It is the researcher who interprets the data in such a manner as described by Greenlagh and Wengrat, (2008),

> *The aim of narrative research* is not necessarily to determine a 'true' picture of events, but rather to explore such things as how the individual has made sense of these events, their attitude toward them, what meanings the events hold for them, and how these feelings came to be. (p. 244)

Riessman (1993) concedes that "…there is no *one* method here…" (p. 5) and stresses that it is the approach of narrative analysis, which "…gives prominence to human agency and imagination…" (p. 5).

As Overcash (2003) describes,

> While narrative research is qualitative research, not all qualitative research is narrative. Types of qualitative research which differ from narrative research methods are reflected in terms such as ethnography, autoethnography, and oral history. Ethnography consists of descriptions often in the voice of the researcher illustrating events, or interviews with participants, and not in the words of the participants. (p. 180)

In narrative research the voice of the participant should dominate, and in the write-up of research results, because it is the experience and the meaning making of the participant, as primary narrator, it should be given the privileged position.

Stalker (2009) summarizes three planes on which narratives are able to be analyzed – temporal, meaningful, and social. He proceeds to describe them as follows, a) the temporal element demonstrates the interrelation between individual's lives and social control; b) the meaningful element indicates that narratives provide a form of communication in which the individual can externalize his or her feelings and indicate which elements of those experiences

are most significant; and c) the social element designates the fact that the original experience is located within a specific social context and created for a specific audience (pp. 221-222). These three elements cover a broad range of material that can be analyzed and interpreted, which is why narrative as research method is accepted more and more widely in fields of study that have traditionally relied on quantitative methods to gather answers to research questions. As stated earlier, narrative as method encompasses the collection of narratives as data from a variety of sources, whether text-based or oral-based. Text-based sources of rich data can be biographies, autobiographies, journals, diaries, written responses on questionnaires, transcriptions of answers given in interviews, etc. Oral-based sources of rich data can be recorded interviews, stories, etc. Ultimately, the unit of analysis becomes the choice of the researcher since "…research methods should be always selected to best fit the research question…" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 5).

Just as the choice of the unit of analysis rests with the individual researcher, so too does the choice of method of collecting the data. The most common way in which first-order personal narratives are collected for analysis appears to be either via written open-ended questionnaires or oral interviews, both of which result in textual data via transcription. As Keats (2009) explains, what is of more importance is how the narrative will be interpreted and he proposes four types of interpretive models, which the researcher can use to come to understand a particular aspect of the meaning created by the narrative,

(a) *holistic-content* where story content is considered holistically as the researcher explores both explicit and implicit meaning;

(b) *holistic-form* where content is considered in terms of formal aspects of story structure such as plot development over time;

> (c) *categorical-content* where specific segments of story content are counted and categorized into researcher-defined categories; and
>
> (d) *categorical-form* where characteristics of style or language use are counted and categorized into defined categories (e.g., frequency of passive utterances). (p. 188)

It is important to note that depending on the focus of the research question, any one type of interpretive model could be used to analyze narratives. And since narratives are constructed by individual narrators, the narratives collected themselves will be different. What becomes important then is the view that "…methods focus on participants' own narratives…and can lead to an improved understanding of the complex and interrelated processes of personal experiences, attitudes and practices" (Lawson, Parker, & Sikes, 2006, p. 57). Furthermore, Overcash (2003) emphasizes the duality of tasks contained within narrative inquiry when he explains that

> ...narrative research is not only the stories and accounts contributed by the participant; it is the evaluating and analyzing of those accounts. Systematically looking for themes or other details in the data defined by the researcher in the research methodology is one of the ways narrative research is different from journalism or creative writing. Narrative methods are a scientific tool to answer a research question capable of yielding data for analysis. Narrative is not simply storytelling it is a process like any other research methodology." (p. 180)

What is striking in Overcash's (2003) statement is the assertion that because of the researcher's critical analysis of narratives, narrative research is a valid research method and as such can be set apart from simple storytelling. This elevates narrative research to the same level as a valid research method collecting and analyzing qualitative data alongside the more traditional empirical research methods relying on quantitative data collection and analysis. Trahar (2008)

adds another dimension to the definition of narrative method when he explains that narrative as method "…is a form of qualitative research that involves the gathering of narratives – written, verbal, oral, and visual – focusing on the meanings that people ascribe to their experiences, seeking to provide 'insight that (befits) the complexity of human lives'" (p. 260). It is the recognition that the interpretive analysis of narratives contributes to the knowledge of the human condition which ultimately offers validity to narrative research.

Narrative inquiry and research on reading and resilience. There is a void in the research literature with regard to the effects of reading stories on human development, specifically resilience, which arguably can only be answered by integrating the already existing knowledge from the disciplines of human development, psychology, and narrative studies and other disciplines such as literary studies, and sociology/anthropology (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Klein, 1996;).

In starting to combine and synthesize the information surrounding narrative and resilience from differing disciplinary perspectives, a more detailed picture of how reading stories could be said to affect human development in general, and coping skills, or resilience, in particular, can be posited. As previously noted, narratives can be visual as well as textual and media such as television and video games favour visual story telling techniques over textual narratives. However, the research presented herein focuses on the consumption of textual narratives via recreational reading since the focus is on whether the reading of textual narratives can influence life skills.

In the field of narrative inquiry, research has validated the importance of narrative to the construction of self-identity (Bruner, 2004; Djikic et al., 2009; Mar et al., 2011). As the theoretical pathway described in Figure 1 is not based on any empirical studies and, anecdotally

adults share the info that certain books and their characters have helped them through difficult situations, data was collected via narrative inquiry as this research methodology encompasses both the collecting and analyzing of personal narratives. Overcash (2003) provides a good overview of the tasks contained within narrative inquiry when he explains that

> ...narrative research is not only the stories and accounts contributed by the participant; it is the evaluating and analyzing of those accounts. Systematically looking for themes or other details in the data defined by the researcher in the research methodology is one of the ways narrative research is different from journalism or creative writing... Narrative is not simply storytelling it is a process like any other research methodology." (p. 180)

Arguably, the application of interdisciplinary theories and methods to support the proposed research is most appropriate as there is an identified void in the research literature between the disciplinary findings of narrative studies and human development. This empirical void has most recently also been commented upon by Nikolajeva (2010)

> While many existing studies have pinpointed the various reader categories' habits and preferences, few have endeavored to take a more challenging task of examining meaning-making. The evidence of young people having access to books and actually perusing them does not necessarily imply any deeper comprehension or even involvement, especially in classroom situations. On the other hand, the abundant studies of meaning and understanding seldom work consistently with fictional texts (cf. Bruner, 1986). Here, vast possibilities for research open, not least with focus on different genres and text types, such as multimodal and hyper medial narratives. (pp. 157-158)

This void can only be filled by integrating already existing knowledge from these disciplines, as recently proposed by Oatley et al., (2012) and combining it with the collection of empirical data.

With this proposed integration, it is hoped that a link between reading stories and developing resilience competencies in children on their journey to adulthood can be identified in examining the personal narratives of the research subjects for the presence of such a link.

This link between reading and resilience could be described as the presentation of having gained knowledge as defined by Coulter, Michael, and Poynor (2007): ”Knowledge emerges through narrative when it is used strategically and connected in an ongoing dialogic between “telling” and “doing,” between narrative, reflection, and praxis” (p. 120-121).

By referring back to the disciplinary insights provided by education and developmental psychology, particularly in the area of resilience research and child development as well as reader-response theory in reference to how meaning is created in the reader, a thorough examination of whether reading narratives will or have had an effect on the individual reader, and if and how that effect will modify or has modified actual behaviour can be undertaken. In this thesis, the researcher uses narrative as both the stimulus (reading material) and product (responses given by child and adult participant). The primary data collection tool is a semi-structured narrative interview consisting of primarily open-ended questions. In general terms, the open-ended questions ask the interview participants to a) talk about their favourite book(s), b) explain why they are/were their favourite book(s), and c) project or remember if they think that reading books will/have helped them in life. The answers to these open-ended questions are classified as personal first-order narratives and are audio-recorded to capture as much of the contextual detail of the interaction between participant and researcher, and participant and environment as possible. More detail on the specific questions and how the data was analyzed via narrative means will be provided in the next sections of this chapter.

Ethics

One ethical issue surrounding the proposed methodology is the interviewing of children, specifically the perceived power differential between an adult researcher and a child research participant (Clark, Flewitt, Hammersley, & Robb, 2014; O'Reilly, Ronzoni, & Dogra, 2013). One way this power differential will be reduced in the current research study under discussion is that the interview with children will be structured in such a way that the four stages of developing rapport (apprehension, exploration, co-operation and participation) as outlined by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) will be followed to allow the child to become comfortable with both the interviewer and with answering the interview questions openly and freely without fear of judgement. In the actual interviews themselves this was achieved by giving the children the opportunity to have long pauses in their answers, to not answer questions at all and being keenly aware of body language. The researcher responded appropriately to these verbal and non-verbal cues to ensure that the child participant was comfortable in the interview situation at all times. For example, the interview with Tyler, an eleven year-old male child participant contained a lot of long silent pauses and questions not being answered as the researcher could see that Tyler was becoming overwhelmed by trying to give an answer that the child thought the researcher wanted to hear to the point of silencing himself. The researcher was able to continue the interview by keeping eye contact with the child, smiling encouragingly and keeping the flow of conversation going between questions and thus not drawing any attention to the unanswered questions. Tyler had a particular hard time in formulating a response to Question 15 *What are the most precious books in your collection?* and Question 16 *Tell me about one of your favourite stories.* The interviewer, having determined that further probing would have a negative effect on the rapport created between the child and the researcher, decided to change the question to be more direct by asking: *Do you have a favourite story?* to which Tyler responded with

"Ahm…not really, I don't have a fav…I don't have a favourite book. I have a bunch of books that I pretty much like when I am in a different mood." The fact that the short pauses and repetition of words decreased the more that Tyler gave his response indicated to the researcher that Tyler had regained his confidence in providing an answer and the interview continued to progress smoothly until Question 19 *Tell me about a story that is important to you*. at which point Tyler began to feel overwhelmed again and after a long pause answered "Ahm, I can't actually think of a book that is much more important to me than others…Uhm, because once I read them, they seem like the most important books that I have read". The researcher decided to end the interview at this point as it became clear that further participation in the interview by the child was not possible.

Another ethical issue is how to give children a voice. With the release of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and in particular the first part of Article 12 which states that

> States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or how own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child,

research involving children began to give children a voice and began to recognize that "[t]he best source of information about issues pertaining to children is frequently children themselves" (Weber, Miracle, & Skehan, 1994, p. 43). The age group of ages 10-13 years of the child participants in the research study under discussion defines the children as early adolescents (ages 10-14 years) (Petersen & Leffert, 1995, p. 298). Children in this age range are generally considered to be in "…the time of transition from childhood into adolescence proper" (Petersen and Leffert, 1995, p. 298) and "…that from the age of 10 or 11 years to young adulthood there is

a gradual shift from more primitive (preconventional) modes or reasoning to those that are more sophisticated" (Petersen & Leffert, 1995, p. 300). Noting these nuanced stages in the cognitive development of the child within this age range, researchers like Weber, Miracle, and Skehan (1994) began to advocate for the use of "...the interview that is tailored to the child's developmental level...", as it "...is most likely to provide reliable and valid information" (p. 43), a view echoed by Greig, Taylor, and MacKay (2013) who state that researchers "…need to respect children and young people as experts in their own lives who have a unique and powerful contribution to make to the research" (p. 205). In giving children a voice by using their own words, Bamberg (2004) takes note of the difference in degree of reflection present within the actual words used and found in the responses to interview questions which are encountered in the data collection process by comparing narrative answers given by adults and by the children, or early adolescents, as follows:

> …the subject [the adult]…is a reflective subject: one that is able to step back, choose from all those that are tellable episodes, and organize them into some form of an overarching theme that gives (more or less) coherence….Children and young adolescents simply do not seem to have had enough practice to work their way up to this kind of challenge, placing them into the developmental slot of 'not-yet' adult. (p. 368)

Referring back again to the responses received by both the children and the adults for Question 2 *Why or why not?* there was a definite difference in the length of the answers by the children to this question. Answers ranged from no answer and just a long silent pause to answers by the oldest girl (aged 12) and one of the oldest boys (aged 13) of between four and five lines of typed notes. The answers of the younger children range in length from three words to three lines of typed text. The length of answer also reflected the multitude of ideas expressed by the children.

While the short answers contained one to two reasons of why the child likes to read books and stories, the longer answers gave a variety of reasons comparable to the length and complexity of answers given by the adults whose answers were on average at least two typed lines of text and gave more than one reason situated within their own individual context. Finally, the effects of the perceived difference because of developmental maturity were minimized by asking the children to look into the future when answering the key question of the interview, Question 18 *Can you think of a time when reading stories help you in life?*, instead of the past, which would not demand as much reflection and reasoning (Dashiff, 2001, p. 344).

Sample

Ethics approval (Appendix 1) for the research study and interview procedure and questions was given by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board on September 24, 2014. Further ethics approval was also sought and given by the Rainbow District School Board in the City of Greater Sudbury on January 12, 2015 and three schools were identified and approached to carry out research within those schools. However, ongoing labour unrest resulted in work-to-rule job action in the early spring of 2015 which lasted until the end of school year in June 2015. This made the collection of data within the school environments of the identified schools impossible.

After ethics approval had been received from the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board on September 24, 2014 both the children and the adult participants for this study were recruited using a combination of the convenience and the snowball methods beginning with family members and acquaintances of the researcher as initial contact points who then referred the researcher to other potential child and adult participants who were not known to the interviewer. The research participants had to be children and adults who engaged in reading for

pleasure. Interviews were then conducted with 15 children and 16 adults between January 12, 2015 and June 2, 2015 and participation was voluntary. Formal written consent was obtained from the custodial parent or guardian for each child allowing the child to participate in the study and no incentives or compensation were offered. Informed consent was then also asked of both children and adults at the beginning of each interview before the interview began.

The sample size for both children and adults was limited to 15 participants for the child group and 16 participants for the adult group for a total of 31 participants. One concern about conducting narrative research is that the sample size involving qualitative research are usually smaller than for quantitative research methods, meaning that the results of such qualitative research may not be generalizable. While the sample may not be representative of the gender or age distribution of the general Canadian population, it nevertheless does present a sufficient sample size for the type of study proposed, i.e., open-ended interviews and for the age groups under study, especially since the study involves studying the effects of reading for pleasure for which self-identified readers were the target population. In addition, this type of research has value since "Describing the way people go about making sense of their experience within these contexts, and contributing to that ongoing sense making, is the purpose of narrative inquiry" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 45). Polkington's (2007) explanation, "Validation of claims about understandings of human experience requires evidence in the form of personally reflective descriptions in ordinary language and analysis using inductive processes that capture commonalities across individual experiences" (p. 475), also aptly describes the study under discussion.

The age range for the child participants was restricted to between ages 10-13 years, while the age range for adults was classified at starting at age 18. The reasoning behind the specific

younger age group for the children is because of the developmental milestones identified within reading capacity. The emerging child reader has generally made the move from early readers and chapter books to full-length novels and more sophisticated reading materials, reflective of the cognitive growth and identity formation within the ages of 10-13 years (Petersen & Lefert, 1995).

By having two distinct age groups for the respondents it is possible to discover if and how the prospective assumptions given by the younger children occurred in the lives of the participants in the older age group, who will have, presumably, gathered some life experience and thus "secondary memory" (Graesser & Clark, 1985, p. 41) from which to draw on for their responses.

Both the child and adult participants were interviewed either in person in Sudbury or via telephone and/or Skype from other cities in Ontario, in Alberta, in the United States, and in the United Kingdom. Interviews took place either during or after work and after school hours and either on a weekday or the weekend, based on the availability of the research participant. Table 1 presents an overview of the various locations of the interviews for the child participants while Table 2 presents an overview of the various interview locations for the parent participants. The name identifiers in the tables are pseudonyms to further safeguard the anonymity of the participants:

Table 1

Interview locations for Child Participants

Location of Interview	Interviewee Identifier
Interviewee's residence (Sudbury)	Matthew; Emma; Chloe; Noah; Ryan; Anna
Interviewer's residence (Sudbury)	Tyler; Olivia
Via phone (outside of Sudbury)	Aidan; Liam
Via Skype (outside of Sudbury)	Michael; Leah
Community location (Sudbury)	Zoe; Lucy; Hannah

Table 2

Interview locations for Adults Participants

Location of Interview	Interviewee Identifier
Interviewee's residence (Sudbury)	Susan; Mary; Sarah; Cathy; George; Christina; Melissa
Interviewer's residence (Sudbury)	Angela; James
Via Skype (outside of Sudbury)	Julia; Jane; Grace
Place of work (Sudbury)	Lina; Eleanor; Sophia; Darlene

Gender and age of participants. At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to provide their name, age, and gender in writing. Tables 3 and 4 present an overview of this collected quantitative data.

Of the 15 children who participated in the research, seven were male and eight were female. As the participants were recruited using the snowball method, the recruitment process stopped once the desired number of participants had been achieved. Table 3 describes the Gender and Age distribution of the interviewed children with the name identifiers being pseudonyms:

Table 3

Age and Gender of Child Participants

Age	Male	Female
10	Aidan	Emma; Olivia; Zoe; Lucy; Hannah
11	Tyler; Noah	Chloe; Anna
12	Liam	Leah
13	Ryan; Matthew; Michael	

Of the 16 adults who participated in the research, only two were male and the remaining 14 adults self-identified as female. Once again, since the participants were recruited using the snowball method, the recruitment process stopped once the desired number of participants had been recruited. Table 4 describes the Gender and Age distribution of the interviewed adults:

Table 4

Age and Gender of Adult Participants

Age	Male	Female
18 – 25		Sarah; Cathy
26 – 35		Jane
36 – 45	James	Melissa; Angela
46 – 55	George	Julia; Eleanor; Christina; Sophia; Darlene
56 – 65		Susan; Mary; Lina
66 +		Grace

Procedure

The collection of data comprised the textual transcripts of the semi-structured research interviews. The research interviews consisted of two sections: the first section was written and asked participants to take a few minutes to complete a short form with their name, age and gender. These forms were then used to assign a pseudonym for each participant based only on their identified gender. The second part of the interview consisted of an oral semi-structured narrative interview which lasted between 3:57 minutes (shortest interview) to 27:11 minutes

(longest interview). The researcher also made field notes as necessary during and especially after the interview.

The interviews were completed in-person at either the residence of the interviewee, the residence of the researcher, the place of work of the interviewee, or a mutual community location. Interviews were also conducted via telephone or via Skype with four children and three adults as their places of residence were too far in distance removed from Sudbury, Ontario to make an in-person face-to-face interview possible. Answers to all the interview questions were audio recorded with a handheld mp3 player. After the completion of each individual interview, the interview recording was immediately copied onto the personal laptop computer of the researcher and erased from the mp3 player to prevent any unintended dispersion of data.

Once all the interviews with the children and the adults had been completed, the interview recordings (which had been collected on the laptop of the researcher described above) were transcribed. The researcher created a personalized playlist entitled “Interviews” in iTunes which was accessible on both the personal laptop and personal iPhone of the researcher. Both of these devices were and continue to be password-protected. The interview recordings was placed in chronological order within the playlist and labeled either with an “A” for adult of “C” for child and a number denoting the place the interview took place in the interviewing sequence.

Using the scrubbing feature to pause and scroll back the interview recording was transcribed verbatim as much as possible. Both the questions posed by the researcher as interviewer and the responses given by the interview participants were transcribed to recreate the flow of the conversation created by the interview. In addition, non-verbal communication devices such as longer pauses, sighs and laughter were noted along with repeated words and “uhms” during the transcriptions. Chase (2003) labels this “process describing” (p.92) to support

the researcher in more accurately recalling the body language, including facial expressions, of the interviewee alongside the actual words spoken by the interviewee. These details are important in describing the emotions and/or feelings evoked by the interviewee while responding to a question as they help to further define the experience lived by the interviewee as they were giving their answers.

Once all the transcripts had been completed, they were given a final verification by the researcher who listened to the individual audio-recorded interview one by one in its entirety and corrected inconsistencies captured in the transcribed text as necessary.

Research tools

The questions for the oral interviews were in plain language regardless of who the respondents are, since it is important to match what is asked with who is being asked to ensure that voice and language are appropriate. The questions for the respondents in both age groups concern themselves with the following general topics: a) reading habits, b) reading preferences, and c) project or remember if they think reading stories will help or have helped the reader in life. The interview questionnaire was reviewed thoroughly by the thesis committee members to fine-tune the language.

The interview questions for the children consisted of the following 23 closed and open-ended questions, and were divided into three distinct sections as follows:

<u>Section A</u>:

1. Do you like to read books and stories?
2. Why or why not?
3. Do you find time to read?

4. Describe where and when you like to read books (at home, at school, during the day, at night, etc.)
5. Have you ever gone to a bookstore or a library to get books? (child)

   From where do you get your books? (adult)
6. If I were to take you to a bookstore or library and let you choose any book you want, what would you choose?
7. Tell me about a book that you have read recently, what is it?
8. Why did you choose it?
9. What does it make you think about?
10. How does it make you feel?

Section B:

11. What kind of books and stories do you like to read? Why?
12. What excites you about the books and stories that you like to read?
13. Tell me about your personal book collection? What books do you have?
14. What are the most precious books in your collection?
15. What makes them special?
16. Tell me about one of your favourite stories.
17. Would you recommend other people to read it? Why?

Section C:

18. Can you think of a time when reading stories help you in life? (child)

    Can you think of a time when reading stories helped you in life? (adult)
19. Can you tell me about a story that is important to you?
20. Does the story relate to you in some way?

21. Are you in some way like the main character?
22. Are you in some way like the secondary characters in the story?
23. What about the setting of the story? Does it remind you of your home or your school (children) or work (adults)?

The sections were determined thematically and by the type of information that was being asked for. Therefore, Section A asked for more factual information on their reading habits, while Section B introduced questions that required a bit more reflection by the participants before answering questions about their reading preferences and Section C asked participants to both reflect and project and give examples in their answers.

The wording of the interview questions for the adults were identical except for the following changes indicated in italics:

1. Question 5 of Section A was replaced with the question *From where do you get your books?*
2. Question 18 of Section C whose wording asked for a retrospective angle: *Can you think of a time when reading stories helped you in life?*
3. References to *school* were replaced with *work* in the questions.

In conducting the actual interviews, some of the questions were grouped together so as to elicit answers that would form a more cohesive and seamless narrative. The sections were structured in such a manner as to guide the interviewee through a series of questions that asked them first to give some factual information and gain confidence and instill comfort in providing answers, thus creating a rapport with the interviewer, before asking questions that required more thought and reflection, (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 316).

Rigour

In narrative qualitative research, the researcher has to assure rigour in both the field work and in the analysis of the data. One way to ensure validity in completed narrative research is to put the onus on the researcher to continually "… make their methodological and theoretical approaches transparent enough to help their audiences know explicitly how they reached their conclusions" (Kim, 2008, p. 255). As stated above the interview asked the same set of questions of each child and adult participants. By encouraging participants to reflect on how reading has helped them in their lives, the participants are "empowered to provide more concrete and specific details about the topics discussed ad to use their own vocabulary and conceptual framework to describe life experiences" (Elliott, 2006, p. 23). According to Elliott, this supports the internal validity of the data collection process by producing "more accurate or 'valid' evidence" (p. 24). However, keeping in mind that the data collected via narrative responses are reconstructions or reformulations of the actual events by the research participants, Trahar (2008) echoes the need of having the researcher be transparent, since "Narrative research…does not have one single, settled meaning… Consequently, there is even more onus on the researcher to articulate transparently how they gathered and analyzed the data" (p. 260). This transparency was accomplished in the analysis of the data by ensuring that quotes were not taken out of context and that context was created as necessary by combining responses to more than one question to create a seamless narrative for the reader while maintaining the integrity of the voice of the research participant.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested with both a child and an adult respectively to ensure that the questions were appropriate and gave enough rich data for analysis. During the actual data collection, the researcher ensured that the protocols as set out in the approved ethics submission were followed by always having Part One of the interview (gathering personal information) precede Part Two (audio recording of oral answers to interview questions). After the collection

of the name and age of the interviewee, and before launching into the actual interview, participants were always read the initial paragraph which advised them that their participation was voluntary, that their anonymity was ensured, and that they had the right to withdraw from the interview at any moment. The recording of the interview began only after the reading of this initial paragraph to give the researcher another opportunity to gather consent from the participant before proceeding with the interview.

During the actual interview, the questions were always asked in the sequence as outlined above by researcher. Probing questions consisting of "Could you give me an example?" were only asked if the response by the participant was deemed by the researcher to necessitate further clarification or delving deeper to uncover meaning.

Once the interview was completed, the recording was downloaded to the personal computer of the researcher and password protected and immediately erased from the handheld mp3 player to ensure that others could not compromise the data in any way.

Brief field notes were made pertaining to environmental influences of the interview (such as noise or other family members present in the case of child participants) to include anything happening in the interview surroundings that could have an impact on the flow of the interview. According to Overcash (2003) the inclusion of anything unusual which may have occurred in the research process would also help to validate the research results (pp. 182-183), if it was deemed by the researcher to have had an impact on the data collection procedure. For example, in some interviews, the participants, both children and adults, were unable to answer certain questions and so the researcher moved on to the next section to not derail the interview completely. In other instances, the presence of the parent while the child was being interviewed either hindered or encouraged the child to give answers. This was captured in the data transcription via bracketed

information indicating when a child participant looked to their parent for guidance. Lastly, during some of the interviews unexpected noises coming from adjoining rooms such as music or video games noises proved to be a temporary distraction from the interview questions or the research participant paused to sip either tea or coffee. Once again, this information was captured in the transcription via details provided in brackets during the narrative of the participant.

During transcription of the interview in its entirety as a "recorded conversation" (Poland, 1995, p. 292), great care was taken to capture both the language and speech patterns, such as pauses, repetition of words or word fillers such as *like* or *uhm* and *ahm*, of the interview participants as well as any non-verbal cues such as sighs, laughter, tears and changes in tonal inflections for extra emphasis. The researcher did not employ anyone to help with the word for word transcriptions and also did not have the participants check over the interview transcription.

The researcher used everyday language in the construction of the questions (Elliott, 2006, p. 29) and the answers of the respondents echoed this use of everyday conversational language. In addition, the relatively short length, (ranging from five to twenty pages) of the majority of interviews (particularly of those completed with children) allowed the researcher to complete all the verbatim transcriptions without any technological help or support. Furthermore, the researcher did not give the completed transcriptions to the participants for verification, as the answers collected to the questions were generally short in length and did not constitute a life history. Instead the researcher wanted to uphold the integrity of the initial responses given by the respondents by not giving them the chance to reflect further on the questions after the interview had been completed, and preventing the urge of participants wanting to edit and change their answers when asked to check over the responses in an attempt to "clarify the intended meaning behind certain statements" (Poland, 1995, p. 305).

During the analysis of the data, rigour was maintained in that every interview was first read as an entire recorded conversation and initial thoughts and interpretations were noted by the researcher before the responses were sorted by the individual question and grouped by children and adult participants onto separate excel worksheets. Coding was then done by hand without any computer programs and using different colour highlighters on the paper printouts. The first step in analysis was "open" (Esterberg, 2002) or "topic" coding (Richards & Morse, 2013) allowing patterns and themes to be identified based on similar wording in the responses to one question at a time. For example, a single word or words repeated by several participants were colour-coded to indicate the similarity in answer across interviewees' answers, first amongst those given by children and by the adults separately and then across both sets of responses. These topics or themes were then summarized in the next chapter first as content descriptions to the questions before being analyzed for their significance to the main research question.

As mentioned before, because of the relatively short answers to each question the researcher felt that hand coding would be more effective for the coding of the responses; a view shared with Liamputtong (2009), who advocates that "researchers should make themselves familiar with their data. This means that researchers should transcribe their data themselves." (p. 135) and goes on to explain that "…computer programs are not always required…I work closely with my data using colour pens (and highlighters) and word-processing to cut and paste the data." (p. 138)

Data Analysis

According to Overcash (2003), "The identification of themes or similarities in the narrative data occurs on two levels, intrathematic and interthematic. Intrathematic analysis considers the themes that are identified for that particular participant. Interthematic analysis

compares themes among participants" (p. 183). It is necessary to pay attention to both intrathematic and interthematic themes, as the individual experiences should not be subsumed by common experiential happenings, a view advocated by Conle (1999),

> Stories can be used to explain, explore, illustrate or prove. But when we use them as such, stories risk losing their connection to lived experience and can become rhetorical instruments. This in itself is negative only from the point of view of narrative inquiry, where it is important to keep experience and temporality in the foreground of experiential narratives. (p. 19)

For example, even though a majority of the adult respondents answered Question 2 *Why or why not?* with detailing how reading for them is an escape and actually used the word "escape", individual differences such as phrasing "a release from reality" (Sarah), "just forget about life" (Jane) and "you forget about all of your problems" (Christina) were noted by the researcher as these individual differences were reflective of the lived experience of the individual and how they defined the concept of escape from their everyday life and thus enriched the data set.

Evidence of intrathematic and interthematic linkages between participants of differing age groups was reported using the following steps from transcripts to analysis:

Figure 2. Process of Determining Intrathematic and Interthematic Links in Data Analysis

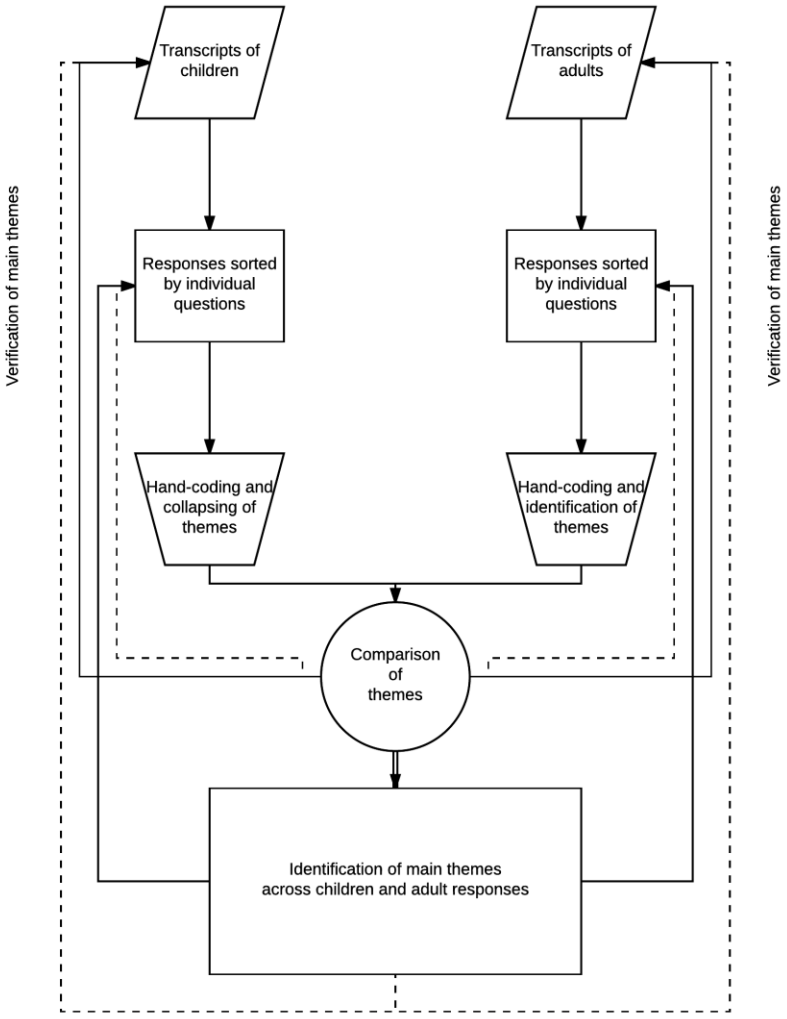

Figure 2. Flowchart detailing the reiterative steps (solid and broken lines) undertaken to determine Intrathematic and Interthematic Links between responses given by children and those given by adults to identify main themes across both children and adult responses.

As detailed in Figure 2, the initial analysis consisted of first sorting out the responses to the individual questions by question to create separate data sets for the responses received by the children and the responses received by the adults. The responses to each individual question were then reviewed in more detail and coded depending on the wording that was used. The wording was highlighted as necessary (e.g., individual words or phrases) to visually identify clusters of common words or phrases and these were then in turn given a thematic label. These

labels were then collapsed into overarching thematic areas for each individual question. For example, referring back to the answers received from the adult participants in response to Question 2 *Why or why not?* and being mindful of how the individual differences in the wording given by the respondents both reflect and define the experience of the individual, as discussed above, an overall theme of reading as an escape mechanism did emerge. This theme was reflected by both the quantity of responses (6 out of 16 responses) and in the qualitative data of the varying descriptions of the concept "escape". These steps were completed first for all of the responses received by the children and then completed for all of the responses received by the adults.

As described above, the analysis of the responses at first identified common thematic clusters separately for both the child and adult respondents. The responses provided an understanding of themes or patterns similar to the ones described by Josselson (2006), "Each individual is unique, yet what we seek in narrative research is some understanding of the patterns that cohere among individuals and the aspects of lived experience that differentiate" (p. 5).

To highlight the differing lived experiences of the individual respondents, the responses to one or more questions by one respondent were selected and presented chronologically and either with or without the actual interview question to first create a context by describing the type of reader and their reading habits and preferences. The answers to Question 18 are then given verbatim to demonstrate the effect that reading has had on the individual respondent by using their own words. The narrative stories of the two children (Matthew and Leah) and the three adults (Susan, Darlene and Sophia) were created in this way and presented in response to Question 18 *Can you think of a time when reading stories help/helped you in life?* The narrative

of the adult Christina was created in the same way by compiling the responses to a series of questions to create her life story, which for Christina was the story that was important to her.

The next level of analysis was the comparison of the main themes across the children and the adult responses. Consistent colour coding by hand of the various themes of the responses created a visual overview of themes across the two sets of respondents and allowed for the visual overlapping of themes. This overlap was then captured in the thematic summary presented in Table 8 of the Summary section of Chapter 4.

Summary of Methodology and Methods

The methodology and method aimed to collect empirical data to answer the main research question: *How does the reading of text-based narratives (in children's literature) support the development of resilience in children (ages 10-13 years)?* and the two sub-questions: *How do children learn about culture via reading narratives? What does this mean for them?*, and *Is there a link between reading narratives and resilience?* by interviewing children (ages 10-13 years) and adults (ages 18-91 years). The methodology of narrative inquiry is the most appropriate methodology to both collect and analyze data for this thesis. The narrative interview allowed the research participants to tell and add to a story by way of responses to laddered questions and resulted in the creation of a data set of first-order narratives. This data set was then analyzed thematically, both intra- and inter-thematically, to identify reading as a protective factor in creating coping mechanisms supporting resilience employed by both children and adults.

The next chapter reports on the results gathered from the two data sets, one for the children and one for the adults. As the interview was divided into three distinct sections, the results are presented for each section as follows: an in-depth presentation of the intrathematic analysis of the responses to the interview questions separated out by children and adults followed

by an interthematic summary of main themes with a preliminary discussion referencing secondary literature where applicable. The last section, Section C, begins with in-depth narrative analysis of answers to Question 18 *Can you think of a time when reading stories help you in life?* including several individual narratives as presented by children and adults before presenting results sorted by intrathematic content analysis for the concluding questions of the interview and the interthematic summary. The chapter concludes with a summary discussing the themes that were discernable across both data sets.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents a chronological synthesis and thematic content analysis of the responses of both child and adult participants to the interview questions. The interview is divided into three sections (A, B, and C), and the presentation of results begins with an intrathematic content analysis of the answers to the questions in Interview Section A (Questions 1 – 10). The analysis of the responses from the children is immediately followed by the analysis of the responses by the adults for each question. This intrathematic analysis section is then followed by an interthematic summary of the responses of both the children and the adults to identify common themes in responses across both age groups.

The responses to the questions in Section B (Questions 11 – 17) are presented using the same format for the intrathematic analysis and the interthematic summary as outlined above.

The next section presents an in-depth intrathematic analysis of answers to Question 18 *Can you think of a time when reading stories help/helped you in life?* by both children and adults. This question is the key question of the research interview as it asks the interviewees to either project into the future (the child participants) or to reflect upon a time in the past (the adult participants) whether or not reading stories will have or has had a positive influence in their lives.

The chapter continues with first an intrathematic analysis of the remaining questions of Section C (Questions 19 – 23) followed by an interthematic summary analysis of the interview responses. It concludes with a summary highlighting themes which were either common to both the child and adult participants or which differed between the two sets of respondents.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the research participants were given pseudonyms to not only safeguard their anonymity but also to make the responses more human within narrative research analysis.

Intrathematic Analysis of Responses for Interview Section A

Table 5 presents an overview of the responses received by both children and adults to Questions 1 – 10. As these questions asked for more straightforward information, the responses are summarized in the table with a more detailed thematic content analysis of the responses presented after the table.

Table 5

Response Summary by Children and Adults to Questions 1-10

Question(s)	Children	Adults
1. Do you like to read books and stories?	14 children answered "yes" 1 child answered "no"	14 adults answered "yes" 1 adult answered "no"
2. Why or why not?	Answers ranged from "it's fun" to "it gives me something to do"	Answers ranged from "I love to read" to "it takes me to places that I can't go."
3. Do you find time to read?	Every participant answered in the affirmative.	
4. Describe where and when you like to read books? At home? At school? ***(only children)*** *At work?* ***(only adults)***	The most common place is either at home at night in bed or in school during designated reading time.	Answers ranged from "at the end of the day" to "everywhere".
5. Have you ever gone to a bookstore or library to get books? ***(only children)***	Every participant answered in the affirmative.	
5. From where do you get your books? ***(only adults)***	Answers varied from bookstores, garage sales, e-books, the library and family, friends and acquaintances.	
6. If we were to go to a bookstore or a library together, and I would let you choose any book you want, what would you choose? Why?	Answers ranged from currently popular children's series like the Dork Diaries and Harry Potter to the admission that the interviewee would most likely browse to see what books are available before making a choice.	Answers ranged from specific book or subject areas (e.g., historical fiction, cookbooks, quilting books, etc.) to the statement "just depends what I am in the mood for."
7. Tell me about a book that you read recently? What was it?	Answers for both child and adult participants varied depending on individual reading choice and if they could remember the book's title.	
8. Why did you choose it?	Answers for both child and adult participants ranged from "it looked cool" to "I read another book in the series" or because "I had to" or "because it looked interesting."	
9. What did it make you think about?	Answers varied between "what would happen next" and "I just think about the story."	Answers demonstrated relating the story to broader themes in their lives, such as "it made me think about how beautiful this world is…"
10. How did it make you feel?	Answers varied from "good" and "happy" to "like I was reading a book."	Answers described feelings such as "happy", "anxious", "peaceful" and "scared".

In providing answers to Question 2 *Why or why not?*, a follow-up question to *Do you like to read books and stories?*, the children Hannah and Chloe talked about the pictures that the words they were reading were creating in their minds: "when I read I see it in my head and it is, like, full of adventure" (Hannah), while Chloe explained more fully that she liked reading books and stories because "…it is like a fantasy world in your mind and some don't have pictures so you can imagine what the characters and everything looks like."

Zoe described how reading immersed her into the story: "the feeling of books by good authors that makes me feel, like, I am actually part of the book.", while Emma explained how reading allows her to step away from her immediate worries and gain perspective:

> I like them because at night usually you, you just, like, look up and there's, like, you sometimes you worry about the next day but if you read a book then it's just, like, you don't think about all your worries anymore and a lot of books have interesting stories and I like to read about them.

The two oldest children gave the most comprehensive answers. Leah, the oldest girl at age 12, explained how books help her understand both people and events, both in the past and possibly in the future, around her:

> …they have lots of different meanings to them and I like to, like, understand different people's interests and I like to read different genres, because I like them, they're interesting…and I like to read about, like, what happens in the past, or, like, books about the future, so it's, like, what if that actually happens",

Ryan, one of the oldest boys at age 13 years, was also able to make a link between reading about events and people in books and his everyday life with the statement that books "give useful information for the future and the present".

Mirroring the answers given by the children Hannah and Chloe, among the adult participants, Darlene talked about how reading puts pictures into her mind: "You get to put pictures in your brain of what's happening instead of somebody else deciding what it looks like for you." As can be seen by Darlene's response detailing how reading words gives her control over how she visually constructs the characters and setting of the story and contrasting the child respondents, the adults combined several reasons into one answer, making their answers more complex and multi-layered.

The most common responses by the adults described reading as an escape from the here and now of everyday life. As Christina explains, looking back upon her childhood reading, reading for her was a way to experience worlds and surroundings different from what she knew:

> …it puts me into a different world almost, you forget all about your problems, you get involved in the story, you learn different, you know, societies, different countries. I read lots when I was young; it was almost like an escape because you could be in the book and just forget about the world and everything else.

Mary and Julia also described reading as a way to learn about new worlds and to gather information and experiences that they might otherwise either not be able to experience or have the courage to try to experience. Mary states, "…it takes me into different worlds and different experiences that I can't necessarily experience myself and I guess it helps me to figure out what I want to do in life…I experience something through a book that sounds really interesting that might tempt me to do, to do something that I wouldn't normally do as I am not a risk taker" while Julia sums up her assessment of the value of reading to her personally with the words, "It

allows you to discover different worlds, and different opinions and different environments that you wouldn't normally encounter."

Lina also described reading as an escape, but added a further qualifier by calling reading an avoidance tactic:

> …but there are so many reasons why I like to read. I mean, reading for me is, ah, escape sometimes; avoidance, you know, if I can keep on reading, then I am going to avoid doing something that I really don't want to do, but have to do.

She goes on to explain

> Um, it's a way into the world, um; it's a way into human nature. Um, it's something that I need to do. … I have as many as four or five books open in the house in different rooms….I have been known to read while washing dishes. I have a system for propping a book up so I can read. The pages get very wet as I turn the dishes…Um, it, I can't imagine not reading.

She ends her answer with the explanation that reading for her has deeper value than mere entertainment in that it stimulates both her mind and her imagination: "it's not just a source of entertainment, but it's a way of engaging my mind and my imagination and um, it's something that gives me real pleasure."

While the adults above alluded to the calming effect of reading as an escape from everyday pressures, such as when Christina confides that reading helps her to "forget all about your problems", Cathy and Jane openly describe the act of reading as a recognized and valued way for them to destress – "I like to read fiction a lot of the time, just to take myself out of the normal day…so it's a way to destress,…at the end of the day especially" (Cathy), and "…because sometimes you just, you need to destress and just forget about life" (Jane).

Reading for entertainment was also a common theme raised by adults and they were able to define entertainment in different ways expressing individual preferences. James defined reading as a "pastime…it gives me something to do instead of watching TV. And it's just something different to do instead of computers" while Melissa explained that she likes to read "for interests. Read up on, you know, whether it's gardening, or home décor, or like that, and then just to broaden my horizons".

Angela initially indicated that she reads for entertainment purposes – "…we don't have TV at home. So it's what we do for entertainment.", but then clarified "And I want the kids to read, so I read." portraying herself as a role model for her children when reading.

Two adults, Susan and Sophia, who are both self-confessed avid readers, admitted that reading had been a part of their lives for as long as they can remember and had become a necessity for them. Susan described reading as her best friend in times of loneliness and isolation and admitted that

> I'm a reclusive so reading, um, nourishes my imagination and my mind. It has always been a saviour for me. Um, I have had health issues since I am young, um, at times where I was totally isolated and reading has always been sort of my best friend.

And Sophia revealed that reading to her is a life necessity much like breathing, defining the close relationship that she has with reading "It's, like, do I like to breathe? Yes. And they're at about the same level. I don't know, I think because books and stories have been part of my life since, since the beginning and I just can't imagine, …I can't imagine being without them."

The oldest female adult participant at age 91, Grace, was not able to articulate one specific reason for why she likes to read, explaining that "Well, that's a question that I find hard to answer because I've been reading all my life… There are things you like, but I cannot give

you the reasons why I like them. I just like them…" She then goes on to describe her personal situation of when she was a small child who discovered that she loved to read, but did not have easy access to books:

> "…when you start as a very small child reading, you don't have a reason for it, do you? You just learn to read, and so you read…Except school children don't, but I was the one who read. We had not telephones in those days, but if there had been a telephone directory handy, I would have read that. I was short of reading matter as a child."

The answers given to this question by both the children and adults reveal themes of reading as an escape, for entertainment, etc. already discussed in secondary literature by researchers such Hughes-Hassell & Rodge (2007) who discusses leisure reading habits of urban adolescents and Nell (1988a) who has done research on the psychology of reading for adults. What is of note is that the theme of escapism are present in both the responses given by children and adults, indicating that when asked to reflect upon their fondness of reading, the identified themes are universal across age from childhood to late adulthood.

All the children answered Question 3 *Do you find time to read?* in the affirmative, even Noah, who had admitted that he did not like to read because books are "long and hard", but explained "Well, I read at school a little bit". The answers emphasized the fact that reading, particularly reading for pleasure, is an activity that the children do make time for either freely during or after school or as necessary during assigned dedicated reading times during school hours.

Much like the children differentiated between reading for pleasure in their leisure time and reading at school during assigned reading time, the adult respondents differentiated between making time for reading for pleasure and having to read for work. Mary, who does a lot of close reading at work necessitating complete concentration and attention to detail, confessed that "I find it very hard to find time to read because my job entails reading a lot, so…it has to be, like, before I go to sleep, or I find it difficult to relax enough to read the way I used to do." Sophia also reads a lot for her work explaining that "…it's my job. I've managed to learn how to, I've managed to become a professional reader … that's what I do".

Christina explained that she does not find much time to do pleasure reading as she has to read technical manuals at work and then also reads with her child to help with completing homework and then reads the books that her child was reading to make sure the content and language was appropriate. All this reading of reading material that is not of her choosing necessarily has limited the amount of time she has available to read at her own leisure:

> Not so much pleasure reading. I read more for my job, technology papers, new products that are coming out, and their designs and how they work and then for my child…I read a lot with her because she's in French immersion and I was trying to help her so I was reading the books that she was reading and then when she started reading even more books I would want to read the book to make sure that it was alright…so I was reading those books.

In referencing recreational reading James admitted freely that "I used to before. Now it is a bit harder, with work and family and a bit of everything…" And this sentiment was echoed by Christina who reminisced: "I don't get time to do leisure reading like just pick up a book like I used to in the old day…more short magazines because you put it down and you never get back to

it, so it's more short magazine stories rather than, you know, a full book, per se." In contrast, Julia revealed that "Yeah. Probably more than I should" indicating that taking time for reading sometimes interferes with other tasks that may need to be completed during the day while Cathy, described how she "read mostly on, during transportation from home to school and back again, because it takes so long and I have no other means of doing anything underground, so…"

Lina, who had stated earlier that reading is something that she "needs to do", and Melissa, who had explained earlier that she likes to read for "knowledge" and "interests" both stressed in their answers that "I make time to read." (Lina) and "I make a point of reading every day…I find time every day to read." (Melissa) emphasizing the importance that reading has in their everyday lives.

Given the fact that adults have to divide their waking hours between work and family commitments it is not surprising to realize in the answers of the adults that the time they have to devote to reading for leisure is greatly reduced. Furthermore, it can be surmised by the responses given by the adults that those adults who were able to structure their daily lives in such a fashion so as to make time for regular reading were also those adults who perhaps did not have full-time employment or family commitments.

Not surprisingly most of the children responded to Question 4 *Describe where and when you like to read books. At home, at school, etc.?,* that they like to read books at home and at night, usually right before going to bed, although the children also admitted that they read at various points during the day as they are able. In describing that he likes to read at night Matthew alluded to the calming effect that reading at night has on him "I like to read books somewhere in the evening, it helps to calm you down. But I also like to read in the afternoon

where there is nothing else, there's not much else to do." Aidan also alluded to the fact that he reads because he has nothing better to do: "Sometimes I read at night to get to sleep and most of the time at home because I don't know what else to do…"

The children also described how they either read at school during dedicated "independent reading time" (Emma) or right after they came home from school in the afternoons. Ryan admitted that he likes to read books as an avoidance tactic "in the living room when I am supposed to be doing my school work", while Lucy and Hannah demonstrated their love of reading by explaining that they read whenever and wherever they may be at any given moment "sometimes [read] at dance, at home and at school, and at the library" (Lucy) and "on the weekends, I read like all the time" (Hannah).

It is interesting to note that some of the children differentiated between the books that they read at school and those that they read at home – the difference being that they may not have had the choice in the book that they read at school while they had been able to choose what they read at home. Chloe admitted that she likes reading books at home because "I like reading them at night in my bed…at school it's just because the teachers tell you to." Tyler was more critical of the books he has to read at school in his answer when he said:

> Yeah, but I find the books there [at school] not as fun…the books at school are not as fun because well I…the books are usually a lot shorter…They aren't usually in the group of the sub…I guess subject, genre? Genre that I like to read. They're not as, they're not…I don't think they're as good quality as the other ones.

Echoing the answers received from the children, all of the adults read mostly at home and mostly at night, with Grace observing that reading is part of her bedtime ritual "I read in bed. I

must have a book at nighttime." The adults recognized that night time is when they have time to pursue leisure reading as reflected in the statement made by Christina "At night, when it's the end of the day and it's my time.", and Sophia who explained "…and then there is, I think, is the other kind of reading, which is, which is, my reading, the personal reading…there is just plain pleasure reading and it happens every night. Every…always."

Three adults revealed their love of reading by indicating that they read wherever and whenever. Eleanor described her reading times and locations as "Basically at home, at night, at bedtime, um, on the weekends, in the morning. Anytime I can snag up a time to do it I will do it. In the bathtub, at lunchtime. I like to read." James gave a similar response when he said "It's usually at night, after work. I'll do it sometimes in the living room, just sitting on the couch, grab the book and read and a lot of time it's in the washroom also, but, or, if we go away on trips on the plane, in the resort. Wherever."

Susan explained that

> I read everywhere. If I am going to a movie and I'm meeting somebody and I'm early, often there is a book in my, my car and I bring it with me. Um, I read in the tub, I read in the living room, I read in the bed, I go camping, I read outside, um, I can read in a canoe, I read.

The sentiment "I read everywhere" was also echoed by Lina who adds "I mean, if I could read when I'm driving the car, I would read while driving the car. I don't though." She ends her response with a repetition and an explanation of when she likes to read: "So, so I read anywhere and anytime I can read…At night, yes, yup. It's very rare that I simply climb into bed and go to sleep. I mean, I'm, I'm, I'm always reading."

Even George, who stated right from the beginning of the interview that he does not read books per se, but rather technical stuff like Twitter and Google Plus, did admit that he reads his, "…social streams quickly and in short bursts…like fifteen minutes here and I am done, more or less." He also recognized the fact that reading more complex material requires more dedicated time: "…but when I am trying to read something more technical…I need more quiet time. And normally after, later at…late evening."

Sarah explained that her reading habit would depend upon the book she would be reading at the time: "Um, it really depends on the book. If I am really into it I'll take it wherever and I'll read it wherever. For the most part it's just usually at home or when I am waiting to do stuff…when I have time?"

Melissa explained that she structures her reading times throughout the day – "So I guess three times a day – morning, right before dinner and then bedtime…" while Christina defines her time to read as taking time for herself: "At night, when it's the end of the day and it's my time." Darlene defines her reading times by the genre of book she reads: "…coffee breaks I read non-fiction books, every coffee break. Lunch hours, generally I will curl up with my lunch and a fiction…I read every single day, sometime…I'm an addict, okay?"

Julia did state that "…funny enough, I don't read at night, I read during the day…", while Cathy and Mary indicated that they made time to read by taking the book with them wherever they went –for example on public transportation: "I am on the [subway] usually. I have an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening, or the afternoon to read…" (Cathy) and "…I do read on the bus if I go a long distance. …Or on the plane, I'll take a book then." (Mary)

All children answered Question 5 *Have you ever gone to a bookstore or library to get books?* in the affirmative with a short "Yes" and with only Leah, the oldest girl respondent, differentiating between having been to a bookstore or a library with the words:

> Yeah, when I was a little kid I used to go all the time and then after school. We have a school library, so every Wednesday we go and get books. (*pause*) And then I go to the bookstore to get, like, the books that I want, like, if I am reading a series, I go to the bookstore.

Her analysis of the selection of books available at the school library and the bookstore demonstrates her awareness of the fact that libraries may have books that she is not interested in reading as much and also take much longer to get newly published books into circulation in comparison to book stores where new books are available on the day that they are published.

The adults answered Question 5 *From where do you get your books?* with more detail and comprehensive answers revealing their personal reasons for selecting a source for their reading materials. Nine adults revealed that they use the library regularly, while ten explained how they receive books second-hand, either through used book sales by libraries or second-had bookstore, or as gifts.

Lina, an avid reader who frequents the library, also admitted "I purchase a lot because books are a necessity. They are not a luxury!" perhaps in an attempt to justify to herself the cost of buying books, while Darlene revealed that while she also got most of her books from the library, she does"… have some favourite books or authors that I really need to go and buy, so I purchase them at [name of local bookstore].

Eleanor, Jane, and George revealed that they get their reading materials as e-books or online material. Receiving books as gifts was also a common theme. Mary explained that because she is older, "…people tend to give you things they know you would like, whereas when you're younger, you're exploring more, so…"

The adult respondents also revealed that they share books with friends and family members, creating their own private reading circles. As Sophia explains, "Um, I borrow books…, I have a lot of reading friends, and so we pass things around." Susan admitted that she recently "…got rid of a lot of my bookcases because I, I really feel that books should be shared." reinforcing the notion that while reading may be in individual activity, it is part of a wider communal activity practiced by friends and family members of the reader.

Question 6 *If we were to go to a bookstore or a library together, what would you choose to read? What types of books?* was a difficult question to answer for most children as there were a lot of pauses in the interviews as they took time to formulate their answers. In the end, Chloe, Aidan, Michael, Zoe, Lucy, and Hannah were able to identify books they would like to have by specific titles – *The Dork Diaries* (Chloe), *The Maze Runner* (Aidan), *Public Enemy Number Two* (Michael), *Powerless* (Zoe), *Minecraft* (Lucy) and *Harry Potter* (Hannah).

The reasons for choosing these books varied from the books being a continuation of a series that they had started reading such as Michael explaining that the book he chose "…it's a detective novel and I just finished the first book…" to because the child had read the book previously and had really liked the book, as explained by Zoe "I read that book for Battle of the Books and I really enjoyed it." Aidan gave a very interesting response in that he revealed that his

sibling had let him read the book but since he likes rereading books, he would want to have his own copy.

Emma, Noah, Michael and Olivia said that they would choose a book to read depending on a specific genre, such as adventure (Emma), comic or graphic novel (Noah), detective stories (Michael) or chapter books (Olivia).

Matthew, Tyler, Liam, Ryan and Anna admitted that they would not know what to choose to read because it would be hard for them to make a selection ahead of time as they would actually need to see what books are available before being able to make a selection. Matthew explains "That's hard. I like, I like many different books. It would be a hard choice.", while Liam said "Um, I don't know. I'd have to see the books." Ryan revealed "Ah, I probably would have to do some browsing first…to see if I found some books I like," and Tyler had a hard time deciding what he would look for:

> Um. I don't know. Depends on which books are there. Ah, and the genre would be completely…I would rely completely on how I feel at the time. Um, it…I don't really know. It changes a lot. Um, well say that there was ah…for example, a science fiction novel or something that I, well, that's one of the genres that I like…Although I usually don't read that many because can't seem to find as many, that I like, just like I said this genre in general. Um, maybe a comic? I also, maybe like a longer novel, but better known?

And finally, Leah confided that she would "…choose the start of a series that looked interesting, so if I like, I would have a continuing book to go onto it, so I would know what I would want to read."

The adults described the books that they would choose by genre instead of specific titles or authors. The genres ranged from fiction to non-fiction. Adults would choose historical fiction (Mary, Lina, Sarah, Melissa, Sophia and Darlene), murder/mystery/thriller (Susan, Mary, Lina, Eleanor, Christina, Melissa, Sophia and James), biography (Julia, Melissa and Angela), romance (Julia, Eleanor, Melissa and Grace), and science fiction/fantasy (Lina and George). Non-fiction books such as self-help were chosen by Eleanor, while Cathy would look for art books. Melissa explained "I cannot get enough of books of geography and history," and "I actually love atlases, as crazy as that sounds." Julia listed the genres that she would look for in a certain order that had significance for her: "…probably romance novels would be at the top of the list followed by, ah, cookbooks and then probably biographies."

Most interesting was the fact that Susan, Mary, Eleanor and Grace explained that they would choose a book depending on what mood they were in at the moment. Susan declared:

> Whatever mood I am in. Whatever crosses my hands. I am, I'm a voracious reader and whatever I pick up, it could be anything. I, I love to read murder mysteries, whatever new is coming out, I've got favourite authors. But when the library has sales on books, where, you know, they have all these hundreds of books, and you can pick them up for almost nothing, I like to pick new authors to see why people haven't read them.

And Mary explains

> Okay, there's different things I would; I would go to different sections depending on my mood, where I was in my life, or whether I was feeling good, or. If I want light reading, I'll go to some kind of historical, or whodunit or those kind of things. If I am just feeling myself I would probably go for books which are based on true stories. I really find that I like those now, because they may be fictionalized, but I know they're, there's a basis in

> truth, and I find them more meaningful now. Again because I am older, you know, you can relate to it more, because of your experience and stuff. But if I want light reading, it's whodunits and historical kind of things.

Grace clarified that "…your choice changes with your mood." which is an interesting observation and could denote that the reader recognizes the self-soothing function that books can have. She ends her answer with, "…but to be quite honest, if you let me loose in a book shop, might, just what takes my fancy. I couldn't really tell you what I would buy."

Lina clarified that the choice of reading material would depend upon the purpose of the reading material – would it be for work or for pleasure with the words:

> Oh well, it really depends, it really depends. Um, when I'm reading for just, of course, I don't want to distinguish between when I have to read for work, because that is a pleasure too, but it's a different kind of reading and um, one that is sometimes more focused. I have to confess, you know, I've read books, and not remembered that I've read them because these are things that I read for pleasure to enjoy for the moment and then I sometimes purchase the same book two years later and I go "I bought this already". So if we were to go into a bookstore I like historical fiction. I definitely like mysteries and detective stories.

George, who had earlier admitted that he does not like reading books or stories, also admitted in his answer to this question that he would most likely have a hard time finding "something relevant to what I am interested in…" in a library or bookstore.

The answers given by the children to Question **7** *Tell me about a book that you have read recently. What was it?* varied widely from current popular fiction titles for tweens such as the

Twilight series (Leah), the *Divergent* series (Liam), the *Series of Unfortunate Events* series (Anna), the *Maze Runner* series (Aidan), the *Captain Underpants* series (Lucy), and *The Dark Materials* series by Philipp Pullman (Michael) to more classic children's literature such as *The Wizard of Oz* (Hannah) and *The Chronicles of Narnia* (Olivia).

Matthew, Emma, Noah, Zoe, and Ryan, identified books by title that were not part of a series, while Tyler and Chloe were not able to identify the books that they had read recently by title but rather by storyline. Tyler explained "I read a mystery novel recently. It was…I don't remember its name. It was the second in a book series which doesn't really have a name…um, it was pretty good and I liked it.", and Chloe admits "It was a book about an autistic kid and he, um, he was really autistic and his dad went on a trip with him and he went horseback riding, and after that he wasn't autistic anymore. He was talking and doing everything normal."

All adults identified their most recent reading material as fiction and genres such a mystery/thriller (Lina, Sarah, Sophia, and James), fiction (Mary, Jane, Christina, Melissa, and Darlene), romance (Eleanor, Grace) or non-fiction (Susan, Julia, Cathy, George, and Angela) instead of specific titles.

If the adults were not able to recall the exact title of the book, they would describe the story of the book in the hopes that they would remember the title while recounting the storyline as exemplified by Susan, who had recently read *GI Brides: The Wartime Girls who crossed the Atlantic for Love*, and who explained

> I read GI…what was it called? The GI, ah, I'm just trying to remember. *The GI brides*.
>
> Yes, and it was the story of four women who came to Canada as war brides and it was their stories and it was absolutely incredibly interesting and I passed it on to my mother,

> even though it's a library book…And their stories, all four of these ladies, are totally different and um, to find out, that what saved them, because of these difficult marriages, was the fact that they had the war bride association and they were able to help each other out.

Coincidentally, Lina and James, who are not related to each other or acquaintances of each other, were reading the same book and while Lina identified the book by its storyline, James identified the book by its title. This book is popular fiction or as Lina referred to it "my bubble-gum read."

Noah, Lucy and Emma explained that the book that they had chosen in response to Question 8 *Why did you choose it?* had looked "interesting" (Noah and Lucy) while Emma confessed that she had chosen the book because she wanted to read something more mature:

> I read mostly all of my books and wasn't really interested in them because they are more for like little, like when I was eight, so I just wanted another book that I could be interested in maybe like still have it for when I am older and I wanted just to reread.

Olivia described the book that she had just read as "fun." Aidan and Anna chose their books because they were a continuation of a series with Aidan exclaiming "I wanted to see what would happen in that book because the first, like, the first of the series was pretty cool, so I thought that one would be awesome."

Michael and Hannah detailed how their choice of book was determined by personal preference in genre – Michael specified that the book dealt with scientific subject matter stating "Well, it's kind of a mix between like quantum physics and like legends," while Hannah

explained that the book dealt with fantasy, which she explains is her preferred genre in her answer to Question 11 in the next part of the interview.

Tyler and Ryan admitted that their mom had suggested that they read the book, while Leah revealed that her sibling had recommended the book to her. Zoe explained that she did not have a choice in selecting a book as it was part of the *Battle of Books* competition held annually in elementary schools, while Liam described that "[b]ecause the movies are coming out and so, I thought I'd read those books" referring to the books in the *Divergent* series.

Matthew and Chloe choose their books because they felt that they would learn something from them. Chloe explains that the book about the autistic kid going horseback riding "…looked really, really like cool, like it would teach me a lot about stu…about horses and because I like horses." Matthew, who had read a book about Greek mythology, describes the educational value of the book by saying:

> [I]found it was filled with action and yet it also taught you something, because in high schools, pretty much every single school teaches you some form of mythology, like Greek mythology and I found that reading this book not only is fun and action-packed but it is also very educational…because it helps you to learn about many different things that the Greeks believed way back when.

For the adult participants, Lina, Eleanor, and Darlene admitted that they chose the book because the cover appealed to them – "I liked the cover. (*laughs*)… I did. I liked the colour" (Darlene). Lina and Grace also revealed that they picked the book because they wanted to give it a try, as Grace explains "…it was there on this stall. And I thought it's Anthony Trollope. I'll try

it.", indicating that she recognized the author's name and was willing to give the story a try based on her previous knowledge of the author.

James stated that he had received the book from his spouse "She just gave it to me and said "Here. Read it." I said "okay," while Julia revealed that she had received her book from the book's author which prompted her to read the book – "Um, the author just gave it to me. …The author gave me signed copy and I was interested in the whole premise of ah, you know, an operatic cook book, and ah, he gave it to me."

Sarah and Christina had chosen their books because it was a continuation of a series that they were reading while Melissa and Sophia explained that they were re-reading books that they had read previously and which were part of their personal book collection. Sophia, who had earlier revealed that she reads "every night at bedtime, Every…always" states "Why did I choose it? Well, one it was on my shelf. I needed something new to…I needed a book for bedtime and um, it was on the shelf. I read it before, but whatever, it doesn't matter." finishing her response with "I'm a serious re-reader."

Cathy admitted that she had "…tried reading it [her book] a long time ago and it didn't make sense so I decided to read it now…and so I felt it was a good time to finally read it." Jane and George revealed that they had chosen their reading material based on recommendations via "Good Reads" (Jane) and "YouTube" (George), while Angela explained that she had picked her non-fiction book on how to learn German as she had been "…trying to work on her German for like, thirty years and I thought maybe it had a secret that I don't know about."

Mary explained that she chose her book, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society: A Novel,* as it was written in short letters which is what tempted her to get it "…because I had difficulty focusing on a long book," building upon the theme in the narrative created by her

responses that she prefers short and complete passages over short and incomplete passages as she states “I find it difficult to read in little snippets as I lose the continuity of the story. I like to immerse myself, I guess.” Therefore when Mary “… saw the way it was written, in short, you know you could read a little bit of it…and it was complete, ……and then you could go to the next bit,”she deemed the epistolary construction of the narrative of this book to be a good fit for her reading habit and preference. Ironically Mary states that she could not put this book down, “I couldn’t put it down, so I would read one after the other after the other, because it drew me in, yeah.” demonstrating that it was the engagement with the narrative that ultimately held her attention.

Four children were unable to formulate a response to Question 9 *What did it make you think about?* – Olivia did not answer the question at all, while Noah, Lucy and Anna admitted after either a short or long pause that they did not know what the book made them think about.

Tyler, Aidan and Liam explained that they only thought about the story and the action within the story while they were reading it and did not think about it much after having finished reading it. As Tyler explains, “Not much really. Just, when I read the story I think about the story.” And Aidan admitted, “I just thought the whole time that I was reading the book like what would happen next.”

Zoe and Hannah identified the content of the books as it related to the books’ genres as what was occupying their mind while they were reading the book with very short and succinct answers: “Robots.” (Zoe) and “Sort of being in another world” (response from Hannah who was reading a fantasy book).

Matthew, Emma, Chloe, Michael, Leah, and Ryan demonstrated reflection upon their reading material as they described connections between what they had been reading and how it related to how they viewed life. Matthew admitted that it "…makes me think about how, like, I am so glad that I am not really in that sort of thing with the, ah, with all the gods and how chaotic they appear to be and I'm just glad that we only have one…," while Emma explained that it "…makes me think about how some people do need our help and you hav… give what you can and if you can't do anything maybe try doing something not as big as you thought, just try to do your best, but not, like, do over the top if you can." Chloe stated that the book "[m]akes me think that ah, horses also can help you with, like, with, like, health problems and that stuff and, like, if you want it, if you want somebody to talk to and that stuff." Michael revealed that "It makes me think about how, like, such important things can be just corrupted into, like, so simple language. For example, like, computers, they, they should be horribly complex, yet people make them so simple now." Leah described her thoughts with the words: "…and it makes me think about, like, if that would ever happen to me, if some scenes that happen would ever happen to me. And, like, it makes me think, like, "Oh that's probably not going to happen, but if it does, that would be awesome." And Ryan, who had been reading the book *For Those About to Rock: A Road Map to Being in a Band* explained how the book made him think about "…how to get along with band members." These five children were able to express their increasing sense of social conscience and empathy" by understanding "…the role of reading in helping them understand their own inner worlds of feeling and emotions and their personal reactions to the external world, making them more compassionate and empathetic." (Howard, 2011, p. 51)

Echoing the responses given by the child participants such as Tyler Aidan and Liam, the adults, Sarah, Jane, Sophia and Grace, admitted that they thought about the story and the action described in the story while they were reading. As Sophia explains,

> It's about, it's about the, it's about the engagement between the, um, it was about, this particularly is about the relationship between the main characters. That's what, that's what, that's what's really interesting about this one.

Angela, who had been reading a book on how to practice German, describes how the reading material helped her a little bit "…in that I just started practicing once a day and doing one of the lessons from the program once a day."

Susan, Mary, Lina, Julia, Eleanor, Cathy, George, Christina, Melissa, and Darlene reflected on how the story and content of the material held personal meaning for them. For example, Susan, Lina and George revealed how what they were reading resonated with them with statements such as "…there's more to life than having fun." (Susan), "…how beautiful this world is…" (Lina), and "…how things are changing, but yet things still stay the same…" (George).

Mary, Julia, Eleanor, Cathy, Christina, and Melissa went a step further in their responses and related either the content, storyline or characterization to their own personal circumstances by either posing the question "…and then you do the 'what if that was me', with all the different characters, how would I have reacted? Would I have done the same thing?" (Mary), or realizing "…that I am not responsible for everything in the world, I can only be responsible for what I can control, which is myself and that saying "no" is not the end of the world to everyone…" (Christina). Julia explained how the book about pairing a menu with a certain opera made her homesick as she loves to entertain friends and cook and bake and had recently moved,

> …it actually made me kind of homesick. … So basically they [author of book and friends] would get together at a friend's and entertain and kind of, you know, bittersweet because you did that at home and we don't have that circle of friends yet to do that here. It was kind of a bittersweet feeling.

Melissa described how rereading *Anne of Green Gables* made her reflect on the what kind of problems she faces in her daily life and what kind of problems Anne faced in the story, "…about what I have just gone through in the week, and I think, oh, I would love to have these problems you know…" And Darlene, who had been reading *All the Light We Cannot See: A Novel* set during the Second World War, admitted that it made her reflect on how war affects children and youth at any given time in history, including present day:

> …think about how many children, because these were just young, young, like, they were young teenagers, young adults and how many young adults in the world right now are experiencing those things and don't have choices in it…Yeah. That's really what it made me think of and how lucky I am.

These statements echo the sentiments expressed in the responses to the Question 2 of the interview where adult readers explained how reading allowed the readers to experience different worlds and realities.

While the majority of children responded to Question 10 *How does it make you feel?* with admitting to experiencing positive feelings such as happiness (Olivia, Zoe and Lucy), ambition (Michael), well-being (Chloe, Hannah and Ryan) and being entertained (Tyler and Aidan) while reading their books and gave short and concise answers, Leah, as the oldest female child articulated the range of emotions that she felt as she was reading: "It makes me feel, like, jealous

sometimes (*laughs self-consciously*) and then it makes me feel interested in, like, what happens in life and then it just, like, makes me happy to read it."

Matthew and Emma admitted feeling either nervous, or sad because of the storyline present in the book they were reading. Matthew explained "It makes me…that's hard because…it makes me feel nervous that sometimes if there is an actiony part that I am afraid that something bad might happen. And it also lifts my spirits when something really good happens. It's a roller coaster of emotions." Emma explained,

> It makes me feel sad sometimes when I read it, but at the same time, like, "Oh my God, what is going to happen next?" and the reason that it makes me sad, like, it's just there are a lot of sad parts in it but, like, one time she told a lie and I was sad about that, but then I wanted to know what would happen next after that.

Liam and Noah were not able to articulate their feeling – Liam stated "I don't know…it didn't really change about how I felt about anything" while Noah said that he felt like "I was reading a book." And Anna simply stated after a long pause that she felt "…miserable" but did not elaborate further on her feelings.

The feelings expressed by the adults reflected feelings similar to those experienced by the children. The feelings mentioned were happiness (Susan, Eleanor, Christina, and Darlene), anxiety (Lina), enlightenment (George), peacefulness (Melissa), sadness (Darlene), relaxation (James), being upset (Sarah), and being scared (Darlene). Susan admitted that the book about the war brides made her realize that "I've got it right, regardless, okay, I've got it right," while Christina explained that reading the self-help book made her feel "Good because I have a hard time, especially at work, where the lines are blurred as to what is my responsibility for my job

versus some else's trying to push their work onto me sort of thing, so it made me feel better when I do actually say "no"…"

Darlene experienced a range of emotions when she read her book *All the Light We Cannot See: A Novel* reflecting a deep engagement with the narrative:

> It was so well written. Um, it made me scared, it made me laugh, ah, it made me sad and I was, I was intrigued. It was, bah, it was just really, really well done. And, and kind of amazed by people and how they coped with the good and the bad and what families and people who love you will do for people. It was just really. It sounds like it would be an awful book, but it was quite uplifting actually.

Lina also immersed herself into her book and expressed feeling anxious because

> …I mean I really wanted to find out what was going to happen in the end. I wanted to find out what was going to happen to those people, because they stopped being characters and they become people for me, you know, and it was very satisfying, because, um, the, the evil doers did get caught, they did get punished.

Mary described how the book made her "…really challenge how you feel and how you think, who you think you are. It makes you…realize that you are who you are because of your circumstances, whereas if you're in different circumstances maybe you wouldn't be the same.", while Cathy reflected that the book gave her "…a different perspective from what I am working on." Jane clarified how reading a fiction and non-fiction book gives different insights: "…when I read fiction books…it brings your eyes to different situations … and it's just good that way. It's like watching a movie that moves you. …and if it's non-fiction, then I just, I feel like I'm educating myself on something…"

Melissa and James commented on the calming effect that reading their books had on them with Melissa explaining that reading *Anne of Green Gables* made her feel peaceful:

> Yup. Peaceful. You know, there is so much around us today, so much high drama and there is so much stress and activity. And you can get wound up into knots about so many things and to, you know, to curl up, you know, with a book and you know, sort of escape to a simpler time and place. It just was very peaceful.

James, who had been reading *The City* by Dean Koontz, simply said, "How does it make me feel? Just relaxing, more than anything else."

Interthematic Summary of Responses for Interview Section A

The questions in Interview Section A consisting of Questions 1 – 10 opened the interview with very broad questions eliciting factual answers about whether or not the interviewee likes to read and where and what they liked to read. The section ended with asking interview participants to begin to self-analyze the motivations behind their reading material choices, what thoughts they were having while reading their most recent reading material and finally what feelings the reading materials evoked. This summary presents the larger themes that emerged in these answers for children, adults and across the two groups. It also attends to the ways in which these answer relate back the research questions.

All the children except Noah, and all of the adults except George admitted that they like to read. The reading choices presented by both the children and the adults was pretty consistent with those identified in earlier studies of reading choices in adults and children (Summers, 2013) indicating that fiction is still the preferred reading material by children and adults alike.

While the children sample was almost equally divided between male (seven) and female (eight) participants, the adult sample contained only two males in contrast to 14 females. As the

sample was recruited via a mix between convenience method and snowball method until the desired number of participants who admitted that they likes to read was reached without any additional parameters (i.e., no gender balance), this difference in gender could be reflective of what has been accepted anecdotally: "the notion that reading fiction is a feminine pursuit" (Summers, 2013, p. 246) especially when noting that George describes his reading materials as "technical stuff…Twitter and Google Plus." However, given the fact that James, the other male adult respondent, talked a lot about the fact that he would read science fiction, fantasy and suspense thrillers, which are all fiction genres, the differing reading choices displayed by George and James is more reflective of Summers' (2013) finding that "men were almost equally divided between preferences for fiction and nonfiction titles" (p. 246). As the reading preferences of child and adult respondents in relation to their identified gender is not the aim of this thesis , but rather whether reading stories and books had a tangible impact in their lives, the issue of gender differences is not examined in great detail.

Both children and adults revealed themes of reading as an escape, for entertainment, for learning about new places, cultures, etc. which have also been identified and discussed by researchers such Hughes-Hassell & Rodge (2007), Moyer (2007), Nell (1988a) and Stokmans (1999), especially in the field of library science which deals with assessing reading attitudes and reading behaviours of library patrons to ensure that the reading material available in libraries suits the needs of the library patrons. What is of note in the responses is that these themes are present in both the responses given by children and adults, indicating that when asked to reflect upon their fondness of reading, the identified themes are universal across age from childhood to late adulthood.

All the children indicated that they made time to read, whether at school or at home, and all of the adults also made or found time to read for pleasure, whether at work or at home, although some of the adults did realize that their free time is much more limited now because of work and family pressures. Not surprisingly, the most common place to read for both children and adults was in the privacy of their home and particularly their bedroom and the most common time was read before going to sleep, although the avid readers, both children and adults, did reveal that they have reading material with them all the time and read whenever they are able to find a few minutes of free time. Again, these findings are consistent with research published by Hughes-Hassell & Rodge (2007) and Nell (1988a).

All children indicated that they had been either to a library or to a bookstore. Leah made the observation "And then I go to the bookstore to get like the books that I want, like if I am reading a series, I go to the bookstore," indicating that she recognized that there is a difference between the kind of reading material libraries and bookstores offer. This is especially the case in regards to the availability of newly released books since it takes time for libraries to process new books that have been ordered and this time causes delays in having access to the next book in a series for an early adolescent reader.

The adults revealed that they got their reading materials from a variety of sources, mostly bookstores and from family and friends and garage sales. These sources are consistent with their increased disposable income as working adults and wider circle of community sources from which to draw upon for reading material.

When choosing a book both children and adults either already had a specific title in mind, or took the time to browse to see what is available and what would appeal to them. This is consistent with researched published on the reading choices of adults by Ross (1999) who found

that the adults choose books depending on "…considerable previous experience and meta-knowledge of the authors, publishers, cover art, and conventions for promoting books and sometimes depended on a social network of family or friends who recommended and lent books" (p. 788). These choice determinants were also reflected in the responses by the children.

Both the children and adults identified certain genres of fiction such as mystery and fantasy. However, while the children gave specific titles of books that they would choose to read, the adults admitted that they would browse certain categories of fiction such as historical fiction, romance novels or cookbooks to find reading material. Of note in the responses to this question is the theme that both children and adults revealed that they would choose a book depending on what mood they are in at the time of making the choice. This interthematic finding demonstrates that both children and adults recognize the fact that they like to read a different genre of books for different kinds of moods indicating that the choice of either the genre of the book or the expected story line is reflective of the mood of the reader at that particular moment in time to perhaps either support the mood or counter it. This finding is supported by the study of Ross (1999) about the role of reading for pleasure as a source of valued information (p. 785). Ross (1999) found that "the bedrock for choice is the reader's mood: what do I feel like reading now? ...Readers overwhelmingly reported that they choose books according to their mood and what else is going on their lives" (p. 790). While Ross (1999) conducted her study with adults, the current research adds the children's perspective and emphasizes the role mood plays in reading material selection for pleasure reading across a reader's lifespan.

The answer to what was the most recent book either the child or adult had read revealed the differences in the reading material available to children and for adults. While adults mostly mentioned individual books, the children mentioned reading a book in either a popular or classic

series. This difference could be explained by the fact that children's literature tends to be more serialized than literature written for adults. It is interesting to note here that there also existed a difference in the length of answers given by the interviewee to this questions depending on whether the book was identified by title or by storyline. This is an obvious conclusion as it takes more words to describe a book by its contents than by its title. However, it is also significant to note that the identification of a book by a title and its accompanying series by an adult participant created a sense of community between the interviewee and the interviewer as it related to a common shared experience either because of the popular culture aspect of the book under discussion or because the book was part of what could be considered classic children's literature. By contrast, when a child was describing a book using its storyline the interviewer took on the role of listener and receiver of information as there was not a shared common knowledge of the book as the researcher was not as familiar with current children's fiction as with classic children fiction.

The variety of responses and motivations presented by the child participants explaining why they choose their book is reflective of the individual choices and circumstances of the children – e.g., participating in reading contests, being drawn to specific genres, or following up of recommendations received by close family members. Similarly, the adults indicated that they had chosen their particular book because it looked interesting, it was the next book in a series, it was a favourite book that they wanted to reread or it was a recommendation that they received from a partner or friend. As indicated by Ross (1999) and discussed above, adults, and by extension child readers, use "…knowledge that the reader can draw upon when considering for selection or rejection any particular book that comes to hand" (p. 788). Ross (1999) goes on to explain "They use knowledge in their head about authors, titles, and genres; memories of what

reviewers, friends, or family members have said; clues provided by the book cover and the blurb on the back; and information from sampling the book" (pp. 788-789).

Eight children did not reveal any reflection on how what they were reading about related to the world around them in their answers. In fact, four children (aged 10-11) were not able to answer the question and four children (aged 10 (two), 11, 12) answered that they only thought about the story while they were reading it. The remaining seven children related the book back to their own experiences and how they would react if they found themselves in similar situations.

While the adults gave much longer answers than the children, their responses also echoed the themes of just focusing on the story and making personal connections with the story. As discussed in the intrathematic analysis, the adults were more easily able to assess what was presented in the story and reflect upon how the story relates to their view of the world. This ability to critically evaluate what was presented in the story and compare it to their personal world view demonstrated the increased life experience and world knowledge that the adults bring to the text as experienced readers.

In addition to the realization that their pleasure reading gave the individual readers "…awakenings, new perspectives, and the expansion of possibilities" (Moyer, 2007, p. 66) along with "social conscience and empathy" (Howard, 2011, p. 51) as discussed previously, the variety of responses by both children and adults reflected the feeling that reading a certain book had elicited and how much they had also become involved in the storyline of the book. What is of note were the sentiments present in the responses by some of the adults like Sophia who admitted that when she is rereading a book, the feeling she gets when she rereads is "great comfort…It's like pulling a blanket around myself…," while Melissa describes the feeling of peacefulness

created by curling up with a book which helps one "…sort of escape to a simpler time and place."

Intrathematic Analysis of Responses for Interview Section B

The questions in Interview Section B (Questions 11 – 17) continued the interview with more general questions about what kind of books and stories the interviewee likes to read and why, and asked them to describe their personal book collections and which were the most precious books in this collection and why. The questions in this middle section of the interview asked participants to begin to reflect upon the reasons for their book preferences. The section ended with asking interview participants to tell the researcher about one of their favourite stories and whether or not they would recommend others to read it.

All children answered Question 11 *What kind of books and stories do you like to read? Why?* by admitting that they liked to read fiction. As Liam explained: "…because anything can happen in fiction books". Matthew revealed that he was interested in several genres depending on how he related to the characters in the story:

> I like to read fantasy books. And things that are fictional, maybe a little bit of sci-fi, a few mystery books. I like books filled with action. It helps you to understand what the character in the story is doing. You can easily get an imagination of what the story character is doing at the time. And where he is going and what he will be doing.

Noah, Zoe, Hannah, Ryan and Leah mentioned that they like to read fantasy or supernatural books. Zoe simply said "Because I like supernatural stuff and ghosts and stuff," while Hannah states "Because, like, I just like it and it's a bunch of like non-real things and you don't see them every day." Ryan revealed "They're really enthralling and pull you into the story

and you can't get back out." And Leah admitted that she does not like science fiction because she is not able to relate to what happens in them:

> I like to read comedy books, funny books. I like to read realistic fiction and then, um, fantasy sometimes. I don't, I don't really like to read like scientific fiction because I don't really find it that interesting. Because I can relate to what's happening in the book and then I understand what's happening, like, the, so I have, like, oh that probably happened to one of the people I know or, like, I can, like, imagine it happening to me, but, like, in the scientific fiction, like, getting teleported to places or something, doesn't really make sense, kind of to me.

Michael, Emma, Tyler and Olivia like to read mysteries, detective stories or action stories with Michael explaining that they are "very fast-paced" and "it makes you want to read more" and Emma stating that "I like to read them because I just feel, find that they are interesting and they're different from like fairy tales and, like, uh, just, like, big adventures and I really like that". Tyler and Olivia were unable to give a reason for their preference of this genre.

Aidan, Noah, Lucy and Zoe mentioned that they like to read comic or graphic novels. Aidan explained his reasoning with "Because when I get bored, there are always a couple of jokes in them…" describing the entertainment value of this type of book for him.

Anna was unable to verbalize the kinds of books and stories that she likes to read.

For the adults respondents, while Susan and Lina stated that they would read anything that crosses their hands, most adults admitted that they like to read fiction books like historical fiction (Sarah, Melissa, Angela, and Grace), mysteries (Eleanor, Sophia and James), sci-fi/fantasy books (Eleanor, Cathy, Christina and James), and current bestsellers (Susan and Jane).

The adults also mentioned reading a variety of non-fiction books such as books on quilting (Susan), biographies and history (Mary, Cathy, Melissa and Sophia), cookbooks (Darlene) and emerging technologies (George).

Mary admitted that

> Yes, one kind of genre that I've got into is stories, of, because I am living in a different country, stories about my home place. It makes me feel really good. It is like a comfort zone for me to read about it. But it is interesting because I've been gone so long; it takes me back there and kind of helps me to re-orientate myself to my roots. Yeah, so, I, and I get a lot of those from family of course, to kind of connect me… To my history and roots and…

Jane touched upon the fact that "Books move people in such different ways", by explaining,

> I don't discriminate because there are books that I have read that have been, you know, bestsellers and (*skype static*) really awesome book and then been like thoroughly disappointed and there has been other books where I've thought "oh this might not be so good, but so-and-so told me to read it, so like I'll just say I've read it" and I was thoroughly impressed and was able to finish it.

Melissa indicated that her choice of book changes depending on whom she might be reading with:

> I do like adventure. As I said I like biographies and um, historical fiction. It really depends on my mood and as I said before, who I'm reading with. If I am on my own I tend towards, you know, maybe historical fiction or biographies, but if I am reading with

> my husband or my son, it's going to be more spy novels or adventure, or action. You know.

Darlene admitted that she likes "books with some substance" as they provide change:

> Change. Yeah, just change because your world is so,… my world is so small. It's so small and if I can read about Afghanistan or if I can read about Mexico or I can, I can be in the footsteps of somebody going on a journey, or, I can be an armchair traveler and learn about the world and the people and, and, and maybe learn a little bit about myself. Yeah.

Angela, Sophia, and Darlene also indicated that they like to read children's books (either because they read them with or to children (Angela and Darlene) or because "…you can still learn things from kids' books…they're a different way of looking at the world, um…and they take you back to your childhood and make you feel, you know, safe, happy." (Julia)

In answering Question 12 *What excites you about the books and stories that you like to read?* the children Matthew and Anna revealed that it is the action in the book that excites them with Matthew explaining "The loads of action and the, ah, and just the adrenaline rush of reading these books with no idea of what will happen, really makes you excited," and Anna simply stating "The action."

Emma and Leah were able to describe in more detail how the action excited them. Emma revealed her reasons as she was able to relate what she was reading to her everyday life with the words:

> [i]t just, like, excites me because it, they, like, with the mysteries, they, there are, like, clues and you stop to read the chapter and then you just try to figure out "Oh my gosh,

> what is going to happen next?" and it's, like, deep stories about people, like, girls my age, it just feels, like, exciting because, like, um sometimes they say something and they give you a lesson and you can always use that for your life. Yeah.

Leah echoed the sentiment expressed by Emma about being excited by discovering what happens next in the story that she was reading:

> It makes me excited when, like, I like books that have like a trauma to them, like, if someone dies, or, like, if someone has cancer or something, and then I am, like, "oh I'm expecting to see if they're going to live or not", and then I just find them, like, once I figure it out, I am, like, figuring out clues during the story to see, like, what happens and I like to figure them out, like, what's going to happen.

Lucy derived excitement from "the picture" that the story created in their mind, while Chloe explained that she derives excitement from "…just like imagining everything that you, that they describe." Zoe and Hannah identified the specific genre of fantasy as giving them excitement while they read, while Michael was excited by "how many genres that there are, how all these ideas came to mind."

Tyler and Ryan were excited by the act of reading itself with Tyler stating "I don't know. I just sort of like reading" and Ryan admitting "Just the fact that I can this and I will read this." Olivia mentioned that she liked the comedy in books – "they are, like, fun and, like, the things that people do in it are, like, funny or…" while Noah mentioned the suspense created by the book's story. Aidan was not able to verbalize what excited him about reading while Aidan admitted that when he is bored, he likes to be a little bit excited and jumpy.

For the adults, Susan, George and Darlene admitted that they were excited by learning something new. As Susan explains she is excited by

> Um, learning new things, because if you are reading a book that was written in England, or you're reading a book that was written in Iceland or whatever, you're going to learn about the culture. If I'm reading a book about something in Africa I learn something and, and what's fun about it is that I'll read the book, I'll learn something and then when I have a friend from these places it becomes a conversation piece which is kinda neat.

Lina, Sarah, Eleanor, Christina, Sophia, and James were excited by the story line. As Lina explains, "Um, what excites me? I guess it's pretty much always what am I going to find out about the world that I am entering into," while Sarah was excited to find out whether a conflict presented in the book was going to resolve itself in the way that she thought: "…predicting the tale and getting it right. That's always fun." This sentiment was also echoed by Eleanor who said "To figure out, to figure out whodunit before it tells me whodunit and then to do that "I knew it! I knew it!"

Mary, Julia, Jane and Melissa explained that they liked "…being taken to a different place … or a different time" (Melissa) giving them a different perspective on life by seeing it through another's person's eyes, "…but from the safety of my home" (Julia).

Angela revealed that she liked to see "…connections with stuff that I already know, like through history and stuff…" while Grace described how a story like *Wuthering Heights* "…stays in your mind, you know, you think about it afterwards."

All children except Lucy answered Question 13 *Tell me about your personal book collection? What kind of books do you have?* by describing their personal book collections as a mix of books that they had read when they were younger along with books – both fiction and non-fiction – and series that they have either read recently or were reading now. Lucy admitted that her book collection consisted of only one particular series, *Captain Underpants*.

It is not surprising that the book collections that the children described are generally a mix of books from when the child was younger and of books that are being read now by children their age. Children also described that books that had been handed down in their families were part of these book collections.

When asked to describe what kind of books are in their personal book collection, the answers to this question varied from traditional children's literature such as *Nancy Drew* and *Lassie* (Chloe), *Dr. Seuss* books (Aidan), *Hardy Boys* (Liam), *The Chronicles of Narnia* and books by Roald Dahl (Olivia), *Little House on the Prairie* (Leah), *Anne of Green Gables* (Anna), *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* (Ryan and Anna) and more recent popular children's literature like the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series (Emma), the *Babysitter's Club* series (Chloe), *The Maze Runner* series (Liam), the *Hunger Games* series (Noah), the *Thea Stilton* series (Olivia), the *Captain Underpants* series (Lucy), the *Twilight* series (Leah), and the *Harry Potter* series (Liam and Leah).

Liam and Michael identified books by specific authors – Rick Riordan (Liam) and Anthony Horowitz (Michael). Noah, Michael, Zoe, Hannah and Ryan also identified the books in their collection by their genre – e.g., graphic novels, humour books or fantasy books and not specific titles.

All the adults except George revealed that they had extensive book collections which included series by well-known classical and modern authors such as William Shakespeare (Mary and Cathy), Charles Dickens (Grace), J.J. R. Tolkien (Melissa and James), Dean Koontz (James), Louise Penny (Lina), and Stephen King (Christina and James) along with non-fiction books like books on quilting (Susan), gardening (Darlene), and cooking (Julia), as well as reference materials like atlases and textbooks acquired during time spent in school and postsecondary education (Cathy, Jane, and Melissa).

The adults used phrases such as "very random" (Mary), "eclectic" (Lina and Melissa), "all kinds" (Eleanor), "there's a pretty big range" (Sophia), and "those are my treasures" (Darlene) to describe their book collections.

Christina and Angela indicated that they had recently reduced the volume of their book collections either because of a physical move or renovations, while James explained that he had reduced his book collection upon the death of his mother:

> Oh boy, I got rid of it, I got rid of a lot of books when my mom passed away. She had a lot of Stephen King and stuff, and we were sharing in between each other, but, ah, after reading them half a dozen times, I said, okay it's time to let them go and I brought them to the library and said "here, do whatever you want with them."

It would be interesting to explore further with James if he gave away the books as they were physical reminders of his loss, which would be defined as both the loss of a beloved human being and the loss of shared experiences that reading the same book will have.

Lina describes how she likes to give away books to fellow readers, "I, I give away a lot of books. I pass them on to friends…" and admits that her motivation to either pass or not pass books along varies depending on "…you know, what I've read that I've really enjoyed and

decide not to pass it on. And sometimes I like things so much I do pass them on," especially if she finds fellow readers who enjoy the same books that she does.

Christina and Grace mentioned the books that they read as children as being part of their book collection. Christina revealed that "Childhood books, I kept all my Nancy Drew and I had Hardy Boys too. All my Doctor Seuss and those are handed down over the years." Darlene referred to the books that she had received as a child as her "treasures" –

> I have the set of books that I learned to read on. My mom and dad bought them from a travelling book salesman and I remember it, I remember getting it. Um, they made monthly instalments. I was not in school yet, I was, like, before Grade 1 and they made, made monthly instalments to buy this set of eighteen red hardcover children's books. And I learned to read before I went to school. And I could read them back and forth, upside down. And I still have those. So, those are my treasures.

As George does not read traditional books, he admitted that his collection is not really a physical collection but rather an electronic compendium of "…trying to remember where I found, sourced this information, and then going and trying to get that information."

Matthew, Tyler and Lucy were not able to identify one specific book in response to Question 14 *What are the most precious books in your collection?* as they like "all of them." Emma identified a collection of fairy tales by Hans Christian Anderson as "pretty special, because it is like traditional" while Aidan revealed that the most precious books are "the ones that we have kept for a long time and that we don't want to give away."

The remaining children identified their most precious books either by specific titles or authors. Chloe answered the question with "The *Lassie* one. I like the dog. I like the *Lassie*

series.", while Liam responded with "Um, probably the *Divergent* series and the *Maze Runner* series." Noah referred to his graphic novel series *Naruto*, while Olivia mentioned Roald Dahl in her answer. Michael considers first editions of books as precious books and mentions that he has the *Alex Rider* series as a first edition in his collection. Zoe simply answered with *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* while Hannah listed *Harry Potter* and the *Wizard of Oz*. Ryan answered with "*Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, probably." and Anna said without much hesitation "*Anne of Green Gables.*"

Leah gave the most comprehensive answer encompassing both a book series and a favourite author as being her precious books:

> Probably the *Twilight* books. Oh! Okay and then I also have this author called Peg Kehret, I don't know if you know her and she writes a bunch of books about, like, trauma, so, like, there is one about Abduction and there is one about, like, lost twins and then a bunch about, like, getting stolen and it's just interesting, yeah, like. And I want to know what happens to them, like, "Do they find him?" but um, probably my most precious books are the Peg Kehret books and then the Twilight series, because those were my favourite books.

The adults Julia and Darlene explained that their most precious books were the ones that they had read to their kids and that they still had those books in their possession: "Actually probably the books that I, the most precious books are the books that I read to my kids and those I still have." (Julia) and "And then I have all the books that were my precious books for my children. Yup, the ones that I bought for my kids that we read over and over. Yeah, those are probably the most important ones." (Darlene). Eleanor described how her most precious books

are the ones that she had read since she was little: "…so I really don't have real precious, maybe from writers that, ah, that I have had since I was, you know, that I've read since I was little…"

Angela described her precious books as the ones that had been the first books she had purchased herself:

> Some of the stuff I bought when I was a teenager, like some of the history books. And the first books that I bought on my own, and... I have a copy of Barbara Tuckman's "The...Something Fourteenth Century." It's a history book, but she's, it's, like um, a well-known history book with and she's…that book is really great. I have it as an audio book now, so I don't have to…I can listen to it often, but I. And it's been like, the cover is all torn and everything but it's one of my favourite books. I don't know, books like that.

Like the children several adults identified their most precious books by specific titles: "the *Narnia* books" (Mary) and "*To Catch a Pirate*" (Sarah) with the majority of the adults then proceeding to describe either how they were acquired, or how they came to read them. Susan described how the books were precious because they had been given to her by close friends who are now deceased, "I…have books that were given to me as gifts and the women are now dead, so I treasure those, you know,", concluding her answer with "So yeah, I have, I would say I have about twenty books that I will never part with. They mean something to me." Melissa also considers books received from close relatives as her most precious books: "I would say the ones from my grandfather."

Christina provided a personal narrative on how the precious books came to be in her possession because of the efforts of a dedicated teacher who had taught her how to read when she had been diagnosed as deaf in Grade 1:

> I was in Grade 1 and they didn't realize that I was deaf. I was a hundred percent deaf in one ear and about sixty to seventy deaf, percent deaf in the other, so I missed the learning and, it was, … they think it was from swimming and all and whatever, and I had an infection and the teacher was yelling my name behind me and I couldn't hear her, so she sent me off to get tested and they found out that I had missed all that learning. So [name of teacher], was the Grade 1 teacher, she took me under her wing. Every day after school I went to her house and she gave me books and they were pop-up books and they, I still love those books, they were beautiful books, and she gave me a whole bunch of those, and then I slowly caught up and first they were going to keep me back, and then they realized that I had caught up from the personal tutoring.
>
> So when I was in Grade 2 she gave me the final books and I kept all of those and then when they used to have the book fair where you can buy books at school, like *The Ghosts Who Went to School*, and all those little chapter books, and you started getting into chapter books, I had tons of those. Mind you my mother had to, I guess they got damp or whatever, and she had to throw out a whole lot, but I liked those.

Sophia gave the story about the author of a book signed the precious book in her collection and how the memory of that experience has made the book precious:

> Hm, (*pause*) one is a copy of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* signed by J.K Rowling. Um, and that was, we, that came when [name of son] and I went to see her, hear her read from that and, ah, everybody was given a signed copy of the book. Only I thought there would be big piles of books and they would just give it to you at the end and you would leave. No, you got your book and you went down and she signed it. And he was what, eleven, I think. And, so we got, we were the last people to go down, we

> were up quite high in the auditorium. We went down with our books and he said, he was watching down the line, and he said, as he watched her interact with people, said "She's not going to talk to me." And I said "Is there something that you want to say to her?" "Yup." "So why don't you write her a note." So he sat, he stood there, and he wrote. I had, like, a thank you card and I ripped of the thank you part because there's nothing on the back of it, right, it was something left in my purse and he wrote her a little note. And when we got up close to her, he threw it across the table at her, like this (*demonstrates arm movement*) and walked away. And, ah, and she said "Did you write this for me?" and he nodded and couldn't even look at her. And she said "Oh, I've got to come and hug you." So she came around the table and she hugged him. …but J.K. Rowling hugged my kid. So that book; that signed copy is pretty great.

Three adults revealed how a certain book had been helpful during a difficult time in their lives: Susan explained that her precious book came into her life around the time "…where things were, um, where I discovered spirituality." Jane described how her precious book on vulnerability and shame helped her through a rough patch in her life:

> So that`s, like, the book that I literally, you know, I highlighted and starred, and you know, turned pages over the book over and have completely loved that book. Right? So, actually I lent it to somebody once and they were taking too long so I told them to give it back to me, because I missed the book, so, yeah…

And Grace revealed how a certain book entitled *No risks – No romance* got her through the war "…when everything was so restricted I used to read this book."

Only Lina and George indicated that they did not have any precious or special books as they either considered the books in their collection just as books (Lina) or they did not have any physical books, only electronic files (George).

Question 15 *What makes them special?* was another difficult question to answer by the child participants and answers varied widely depending on how the child interpreted the meaning of "special" in the question – i.e., either a tangible or intangible way. The children who placed a tangible, almost monetary, value on "special," like Emma, described how "if the author is very like famous for what he does, I feel like if you buy that book it might be a little better than the ones of unknown authors." Michael equated good bookbinding to making the book special "having books that were, made like a long time ago is what makes them feel special, like precious …" Some children, such Leah, also recognized the expense of acquiring books which makes completing a series a costly endeavour:

> [t]hey're precious because, like, one, it costs a lot of money to collect all the books and then, like, you feel proud of reading them all. And then, like, if they're all worn out then you feel proud, like, "Oh, I spent so much time reading this book and now it's over and so I…" just, they're precious because I really like the stories and then what I just said.

Intangible values of "special" were reflected in statements such as "It was the first book I got" by Zoe; "Because my Dad bought them for me when I was little, so" by Hannah; or "They're the ones that have been in our family and we want to still keep them as long as we can" by Aidan.

These statements explained how the book came into the possession of the child either via a specific family member or passed down within the family.

Chloe and Noah referred to the main characters of the book as making the books special with Chloe referring to the dog of the Lassie books and Noah referring to the characters in very general terms. Three children explained that the books were special because they were "fun" (Matthew), "funny" (Olivia) and "good" (Anna).

Tyler was not asked this question as he was becoming too overwhelmed with trying to answer these particular questions in the interview.

For the adults, the answer to this question was intertwined with the responses to the previous questions for the adults but the most common response indicated that what made certain books precious or special was how they came to be in their possession or what kind of memories they attached with reading the books. This sentiment was best summarized by Sophia who said "…I think the most precious ones [books] are the ones tied to some kind of event, or um, or, somebody, or a particular person." This statement was echoed by Eleanor who said: "Who gave them to me. Or, how they were given to me. I have a *Harry Potter* which was the last book my Dad gave me before he passed. So that is a…that doesn't go anywhere." Christina revealed "…it seems to be the people who give them [the books] to me – [name of teacher], [name of partner], so those ones I want to keep."

Julia associated the books she deemed special with the memories of reading them with her children: "Again, it's the memory, the fact that you know, when you reread them or look at them, you know, it brings back certain memories, certain instances of cuddling on the couch, you know, with the fire going and it's snowing you know, them [the children] being content to be with you."

Melissa described how a book she received from her grandfather, who was a book collector, is precious to her because of the bond it represents between herself and her grandfather:

> I think in part the sentimentality of it and then also, he was very, he was very careful with what he gave to whom and I have one book called "Stories from the Ballet" because I grew up taking ballet and um, even though some of the stories are a little odd or a little dark, I love that book. I think because it speaks of my childhood and it speaks of how well my grandfather knew me and understood me.

Cathy details how a book passed down to her is precious to her since other family members have read the book and it can thus be discussed together: "Um, with *Pride and Prejudice* because it is a family book and because not only I have read it. Other people have read it, which is nice."

Darlene remembers how her gardening books represented her former life when she worked in horticulture: "So, like, they're special and I like flowers. So, just …yeah, they're all little parts of my life. I guess it really is what it is…they reflect all the way through."

Mary and Angela identified books that broadened their horizons as being special to them. While Mary described how the *Chronicles of Narnia* held a special meaning for her:

> Because they're the first books, I guess, I really go into. And, ah, expanded my horizons…And made me think about things bigger than myself …It was just different worlds. I mean they weren't real worlds, but it was taking you to a different place and guess as a child the whole magic of it was special and I still believe in magic (*chuckles*)…",

Angela remembered coming to the realization that the history presented in the book that she had bought for herself as a teenager differed from how the history was presented at school:

> I remember reading them and, and realizing things for the first time. Like, going, "Oh I don't know that," or, like, that was history that I would never have been taught in high school or grade school and reading it on my own, and going "Holy Cow! How come nobody taught me this!" or "This is so amazing." Like, she's got a cool chapter in it on the Black Death and how it affected Europe and it's, it's amazing, like, holy cow, no history book that I had read before that had come anywhere near it.

James described that the book contained a good story which is what made the book special: "It was just the story. It was a good story. For…the characters were very thought of and he [the author] was a very descriptive writer, obviously, and you felt like you were there."

Grace was not able to say what made their precious book special, repeating "I don't know. I don't know. I love *Little Women* because it is so familiar to me now. I mean, I read it as a child and I've been reading it ever since, I can even recite the first line." The question was not asked of George as he only had an electronic collection.

Reflecting on how their precious books have had an impact on their lives, Jane simply said that "[j]ust because they touched, like they had an impact, right?" and Sarah explained that her precious book "…got me through Grade 8. I took it with me every day. Once I actually like, bought a copy. It's what I read … over and over again in Grade 8…I was being bullied and so, I had my books," alluding to a more significant and lasting importance of the book in its physical form for her beyond the narrative contained within its covers.

In response to Question 16 *Tell me about one of your favourite stories,* Tyler, Lucy and Anna admitted that they did not have a favourite story while Olivia described how the stories that

her Dad made up at bedtime were her favourite stories: "Um, (*long silence*)…Well, um, sometimes at bedtime my dad makes up stories."

The remaining children all described their favourite stories as books which ranged from *The Hobbit* (Matthew) to *Harry Potter* (Liam and Hannah), and the *Dork Diaries* (Chloe) to the fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel* (Zoe). Matthew revealed:

> There's one, there's a group of books that I had read a while ago with my mom and ah, they are things, like, the Hobbit and ah, JRR Tolkien. Those are very fun books to read. Where, where these weak people go out on an adventure and become strong and become brave…And, like, the weakest thing, people get the job done in the end.

Liam and Hannah described *Harry Potter* as their favourite stories because "They're well written I guess. I don't know." (Liam) and "I like that he goes to this giant place and there is a bunch of magical things." (Hannah). Chloe liked the fact that the *Dork Diaries* has "…everything you want in a book for me because it incorporates the whole family and not just all the friends at school."

Leah gave a detailed explanation about why she likes her favourite story:

> Ah, okay so one of my favourite stories is from Peg Kehret; it's *Escaping the Giant Wave*. I read this, like, in Third Grade. It's about um, these two kids who go on a trip with their parents and then one of the kids has a bully but their parents are going to go, because it's, like, a work convention and so his family has to go too, and then during that time there is a tsunami warning but then first before that there is, like, an earthquake and then a really big fire. And then a tsunami and they have to go to safety with but people that they met, that they helped them, they die. And they find people who died, but the parents are gone on a cruise ship for their work the whole entire time…so it's just really

> interesting and, like. It scared me because oh boy, that could happen. I like how it has a bunch of, like, scenes, like. It has scenes that happened in real life and I like to, like, oh, I've never seen that before, but now I can understand what actually happens. Like, if that was, like, a real story then from someone's perspective then I know what happens and then I like to, like, think that actually happened so, like, I know what went on…(*mumbling*)

And Ryan stated:

> Um, Merlin is one of my favourites. So it's about Merlin from King Arthur as a young kid. So, he, he's gone blind as a child but he can see through his magic, although it is not as good as real sight. So, he kind of just solves problems around fantasia as they come up. Um, I like the magic in it. It's fun. It's really, really exciting. As soon as you hit the end of the chapter there is a cliff hanger.

For the adults, Lina, Sarah, and Cathy were not able to identify their favourite story or stories as they were not able to pick just one story. As Lina states: "I can't…I can't…there are too many…Um, no, to tell you the truth, to tell you about, I don't think I could pick one. I really don't…I could not decide. I think I have too many favourites." Sarah mumbled "Ah, crumbs…Oh, I don't know if I have a favourite…" and goes on to describe the plots of two books that she had read recently. Cathy reflects among pauses "Hm…I don't know what that would be…"

Eleanor identified her favourite stories by identifying both her favourite authors and the circumstances around the reading of a book:

> One of my favourite stories…Oh Good Lord! I don't know. Oh, actually I do know. I have one writer that she writes, it's a combination of a paranormal and a mystery, She is a detective that is a witch and, ah, I really enjoy that particular…actually there are two that come to mind…that one there that is a series by Heather Blake she's really good, it's a whodunit type but with the backdrop of a witch and paranormal. And the other one is from Christopher Moore which is a funny book *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal* and it's hilarious and I remember, actually, it's probably how I read it. I read it with my husband. We read it out loud to each other and we spent the whole time killing ourselves laughing. That's probably one of my best favourite stories. But it's the, the around more so than the story.

As adults reflected on answers to this question it became obvious that they did not have one favourite story, but rather had either stories by favourite authors or specific stories that had resonated with them. As Christina explained:

> My favourite stories…*Nancy Drew and the Clock*. I don't know why I remember that one. It was probably one of the first Nancy Drew that I read. Um, the very first Stephen King one. That he's got me hooked on, wanting to read more and more. He stopped doing them, I think he got sick, and he stopped and then he went back to it…so you're waiting, you know, patiently to see what is going to happen to that main character, and you know, and how these stories are going to end. Nancy Drew, it's because she was independent, and she was solving mysteries and she was a young girl, which I was a young girl at the time reading it, so it was almost like the person that I want to be like.

Melissa discussed how certain themes of overcoming struggles or having plot twists made stories her favourite stories:

> I find that stories that, ah, you know, couple, um, sort of heart-wrenching themes with, you know, ah, an unexpectedly beautiful ending, you know. I think it's why I like, I think it's why I like so much of C. S. Lewis' work, you know, or you know, Tolkien's work, it's because you have these sort of epic tales, these grand stories, and there is trouble and there is strife along the way. And there are hardships and everything looks like, you know, it's going to end very badly. And then you have this beautiful unexpected twist that, you know, someone really goes out of their way to be very selfless and they bring about a tremendous victory for everyone. And stories like that, I guess, maybe, because they remind me of, you know, my hopes and dreams for future things. Ah, you know, a desire for a turning in our own world, and, ah, almost, you know, biblical themes of redemption, you know, yeah.

Mary and Jane in particular described the *Chronicles of Narnia* as their favourite stories with Mary stating that "…the Narnia books must have done something similar to me [of learning something, and realizing something you didn't know before and relating it to your own life] when I was a child"…making this adult participant realize "…that kids could do things. Achieve things."

Julia also singled out children's books as they reflected the feelings she had towards her children:

> They're both children's books – well, yes, one is *Love you Forever* by Robert Munch and the other one is *The Littlest Donkey* by Kathie Gifford. It tells the story of Jesus' birth from the donkey's point of view. Yup, those two are my, yeah, they're actually on my bedside table…Um, I think it's for *Love you Forever*, it's, um,…my sister-in-law gave it to me when I had my first child and, um, I read it to every single one of my kids over and

over and over again and to me, it's, it's what motherhood is about…It just, just symbolizes how I feel about my kids.

While thirteen children answered Question 17 *Would you recommend other people to read it? Why?* in the affirmative, Lucy said "No, just me…Because I, I just have a personal mind on my own that just wants to …, read, read on my own."

Matthew, Chloe, Aidan, Liam, Noah, Michael, Hannah, Leah and Ryan commented that they thought other people should read the book so that they can enjoy it as much as they had and thought that the other person would enjoy the action. Matthew explained "Yes. They're very fun. Full of action. They have a message to you"; while Chloe answered with "Yeah, it's just a good book overall." Aidan reflects in his answer "Yeah, definitely…Because it gives kids like me, they like action sort of stuff and also surprises in books and they will not know what happens next…so I think that they should read it." Liam simply states "Yeah, 'cause well, they're really good books." and Noah echoes the answers of Aidan and Liam with "Yes. Because they are great stories and they have lots of suspense and…they're just good stories." Michael would recommend his book as he believes that "…a lot of people find their, like, their excitement in games these days and the book that has a similar storyline as the games and any person who plays this…" would find his book interesting as well. Hannah responded wistfully "Yes, I would…Because (little sigh) it's, like, because then other people can enjoy the same stuff as me."

Once again Leah gave the most insightful answer and describes in her answer how her recommendations have influenced the reading choices of her friends:

> Whenever, okay so all of my friends, I recommend all of my favourite books to them and they…I'm known for recommending good books so anytime someone is, like, bored or something, they go and get the book that I read. But the same author, Peg Kehret, she had polio… but she survived it, and so it's, like, that makes it even more interesting; like, she still writes books, even though she had polio. Because I know that my friends, they're interested in this kind of stuff and they, like, like adventure stories and like realistic fiction and they, like, they like the same things that I like and so I recommend it to them because they like what I like and there was one point in time when I recommended the book to tons of people and they all went and read it, so there were five people in my class reading the exact same book.

Emma reflected that while she would recommend her favourite story, she does realize that "…a lot of people have different tastes" and was not sure if her favourite book would appeal to her friends:

> I would recommend it because I bet that it, like, there are a lot of girls in my class. And I think, like, most of the girls, like, they try to read books and sometimes they just, like, they don't know what to read. They read some sorts of books that I have read and I just think they might have some more taste to reading, I don't know, but I think that they might like the book.

The question was not asked of Tyler and Anna as they had not identified any favourite story. It was also not asked of Olivia who described how the stories made up by her dad at bedtime were her favourite stories as the researcher made the assumption that the child would not be sharing these stories with anyone outside of her immediate family.

Among the adult respondents, Julia, Cathy, Jane and Melissa were very adamant that they would recommend their favourite story to other people giving statements like "Oh definitely yeah, if you can get through it without crying…Again, it [*Love you Forever*] gives you, um, a good perspective on motherhood, so if you don't have children it just, yeah…It's a fabulous book" (Julia), and "Absolutely…so that they can have the same experience that I have" (Cathy). Jane explains,

> Oh absolutely, absolutely. Because I liked it so much. So, if I like it, then I, I think people should read it. It's pretty personal, right, with my books, so, yeah. And especially with a book, that, um, especially as a child you were exposed to and as an adult, you still love it, it stood the test of time.

Melissa discusses the effect that reading good literature could have on a person as her reasoning for recommending favourite books and stories to others:

> I think, I think everyone should read great literature. (*laughs*). Because you become a better person when you read good literature…You know, especially if you can see, you know, I find a lot of good literature has a moral, you know, to the story and if you can see the moral and if you can learn from it, um, you know, I think you are, I think you do become a better person for that. ..It's very inspirational to read books. …Providing you're reading the right sort of book. (*chuckles*)

George, Grace, and Darlene explained that they would either recommend their favourite story to like-minded people (George), or recognizing that "…other people's tastes are often very different, aren't they?" (Grace) "…I recommend that people read anything that they can or want to read" (Darlene), as they would not necessarily recommend the books that they consider to be special to others.

Interthematic Summary of Responses for Interview Section B

The questions in Interview Section B (Questions 11 – 17) continued the interview with more general questions about preference in reading materials and asking both children and adults to describe their personal book collections and which were the most precious books in this collection and why. The questions in this middle section of the interview asked participants to begin to reflect upon the reasons for their reading material preferences. The section ended with asking interview participants to tell the researcher about one of their favourite stories and whether or not they would recommend others to read it.

All the children identified either current fiction titles in children's literature or a particular genre such as fantasy or mystery as their preferred reading material. In contrast, the adults admitted that they would read anything, whether it was fiction or non-fiction that they found interesting, indicating that their reading tastes had matured and that their reading preferences had also been broadened. In addition, five adult female respondents (Julia, Angela, Sophia, Darlene and Grace) all emphatically declared their love for children's books. These findings are consistent with research published and cited earlier in the field of library science which focuses on reading preferences and reading habits of library patrons (Moyer, 2007).

In addition, Melissa, an adult reader, provided the insight that the type of reading material she reads "really depends on who I'm reading with" explaining that "you want to read something that everyone who's reading it is interested in and maybe I'm more flexible" reflecting that she adjusts her reading preferences to her personal circumstances (i.e., whether or not she is reading alone and with whom she is reading) in that moment in time. This particular insight has yet not been discussed in the secondary literature.

Both the children and the adults indicated that they could be excited by their reading material about either the storyline, or how their imagination is being stimulated, either by trying to figure out a whodunit or by imaging the pictures that are being created by the author's words, or just simply the act of reading itself (Ross, 1999).

It is interesting to note that the children who gave specific titles of books identified series centered on the main characters and not individual books. This is reflective of published studies that have reported that children "…like to buy books in a series or by the same author" (Davila & Patrick, 2010, p. 201). The adults on the other hand classified the books in their personal book collection both by genre or specific author and much like the children, revealed a bit of how they acquired the books which gave a personal insight into the stage of life they were at when they either received or parted with the book.

When the children were asked about the most precious books in their collection, what was of most interest in these answers is that titles of books appeared in the answers to this question that were not mentioned in the responses to the previous questions. This could be reflective of the fact that the children were mentally recalling and evaluating the individual books in their book collections while formulating their answers and books that had significance to them were beginning to come to the forefront. By taking the time to reflect on their answers the books mentioned were not the same ones with which they had initially answered the questions in the first section of the interview as those questions had asked about a book that they had read recently. This mental processing was shown by the statement made by Noah who described his book collection as "A lot of my books are graphic novels and I… um… one of the series that I am working on right now is called *Fable Haven*," but answered the subsequent question with simply "Ah … *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*." It was also reflected in the assertion

made by Leah who changed the focus on books half-way through her answer: "Probably the *Twilight* books. Oh! Okay and then I also have this author called Peg Kehret…"

By contrast the adults had no difficulty identifying the most precious books in their collection (if they considered their books as precious) and were able to explain that what made their precious books special were the memories attached to the books about who the giver of the book was or their experiences reading the books (e.g., such as Julia's description of reading books to her children when her children had been younger). This ease of identification could be related to the adult's matured sense of a value system reflected in that they are able to draw upon their experience to link significant experiences in their lives with specific books and stories. There is not much published secondary literature exploring this phenomenon between a physical object and a lived experience as it relates to books.

The books identified in their book collections as the most precious by both children and adults are those that have been passed down in the family of the reader or have been given to the reader by either a close family member or friend who has since passed away. These books were books that were being reread and had had a lasting significance to the individual readers and with whom they did not want to part. As Strand Ludeman (2007) states: "Books can be a potent reminder of their owner because, unlike other keepsakes, the owner of the book has an interactive relationship with it. The interaction that the reader has with the intangible content has a direct bearing on the value of the object" (p. 15).

When the children and adults were asked to talk about one of their favourite stories three children and three adults were not able to name a favourite story either because they were not able to choose just one story or book, or because they did not want to give one story preferential treatment over the others. One child, Tyler explained that "I have a bunch of books that I pretty

much like when I am in different moods" further emphasizing the fact that for some readers the type of reading material that they may be reading at any moment is both reflective of and supports their moods and as such are constantly changing and evolving. And while the remaining children and adults were able to identify their favourite stories and as mentioned above, it was interesting to note that seven adult respondents chose stories that they read as children as their favourite stories and that had had a lasting impact on them. This is reflective of findings in the secondary literature by Moyer (2007) who found when interviewing library patrons about their leisure reading preferences that while "…none were asked about childhood reading experiences…[but] everyone discussed it in their responses" (pp. 72-73).

Both children and adults realized that everyone has different tastes in reading material, so they were sensitive to the fact that they would not necessarily recommend their favourite book to others. There is a lack of published research on how mood affects the selection of reading material beyond the article by Ross (1999) as well as how the hesitation or unwillingness of a reader to share their personal book choices with fellow readers is based on the individual reader's recognition that everyone has individual tastes.

Intrathematic Analysis of Responses for Question 18

Interview Section C opened with the key question, Question 18, of the interview as relates to a link between reading and resilience. The question asked child and adult participants to either project or reflect upon a time when reading helped them in their life. The question was left as broad and open-ended as possible so as to not lead the participants' responses.

Children's responses. For the child respondents, Table 6 presents a thematic overview of their responses.

Table 6

Can you think of a time when reading stories can help you in life? – Condensed Children Responses by Theme

Theme	Name	Response
Modelling resilient behaviour	Matthew	There have been times when I have been bullied at school. And when I, and sometimes when I read books it helps to get a clear picture into my mind that even though I am getting bullied, even though I don't feel too happy, there is something that I can probably do that they couldn't, or. And it would allow me to achieve my goals and not to worry too much about the bullies. ... it helped me.
Creating understanding - supporting career choice	Leah	…she had polio and it was, like, her biography about herself so she wrote all about what she, when she had polio and stuff and it helped me in my understanding what, like, polio can do to you. And I, like, kinda want to be a nurse and so, like, there were nurses in there and it helped me learn. She wrote about how mean the nurses were, and so I was, like, maybe I can make a difference and be a nice nurse. So it helped me think about, like, what I can do.
Escape/ Recovery - Calming effect	Zoe	When I am upset I read something happy or funny…
Escape/ Recovery - Calming effect	Lucy	Yup…this comic actually helps me to calm down, if I get really piped up angry.
Escape/ Recovery - Calming effect	Hannah	When I am really stressed…, it helps me calm down. And when I am upset doing homework, I just like to step away and I just read and calms me down.
For information – school projects	Chloe	When you're doing a project and you want to read, like, or a book talk which I am this week and…And when you're, like, reading about stuff for projects and, like, animals and different species and all that stuff.
For information – increasing vocabulary	Michael	I think it's probably in your English exams because it teaches you more words.
For entertainment	Emma	Um, I think it was when, like, I was, it was, like a couple of months ago…in Chapters…got out the *Sincerely Sophie* book and …started reading it and it just, like, I had a lot of fun, because…and it's now one of my favourite books.
No link made	Tyler	(*long pause*). I can't think of one actually.
No link made	Aidan	I don't think reading ever or really has…I don't think reading really has helped me so much…because, like, I mostly learned all this stuff I know from school.
No link made	Liam	Not really.
No link made	Noah	Um (*long pause*)…not right off the top of my head right now.
No link made	Ryan	Hm (*pause*) I don't think so…I mean, it's just, it's fun. That's why I read.
No link made	Anna	No.
No answer	Olivia	(silence)

Of the child participants Olivia did not provide an answer to this questions while Tyler, Aidan, Liam, Noah, Ryan, and Anna, stated that they did not think that reading stories helps in life. Answers ranged from "I can't think of one actually" (Tyler); "I don't think reading ever or really has. I don't think reading has really helped me so much…Because like I mostly learned all this stuff I know from school." (Aidan); "Not really." (Liam); "…not right off the top of my head right now." (Noah); "I don't think so…I mean, it's just, it's fun. That's why I read." (Ryan); and "No." (Anna).

Chloe and Michael interpreted this question to mean that reading stories would give them practical advice to help them complete projects at school about "animals, and different species and all that stuff" (Chloe) or increases their vocabulary "…probably in your English exams because it teaches you more words" (Michael).

In contrast, Zoe, Lucy and Hannah admitted that the act of reading calmed them down when they were upset or really stressed out. Zoe states "When I'm upset I read something happy or funny." and Lucy admits "This comic [referring to a Captain Underpants book] actually helps me to calm down, if I get really piped up angry". These observations show that these children already possessed insight into how the act of reading affects them positively – "…when I am upset doing homework, I just like to step away and I just read and it calms me down" (Hannah) demonstrating the understanding by the child that the act of reading can be regarded as a coping mechanism of self-regulation to consciously remove oneself and recover from the stress of the moment.

What follows are the stories of Leah and Matthew, the two remaining children whose answer to Question 18 provided the most insight in how reading does support resilience by assisting with coping strategies and modeling positive behaviour. As discussed in the Data

Analysis section of the previous chapter, these longer narratives were created by compiling responses to questions in a chronological order. These responses differed from the responses received by the other children in both the length of the responses and reflection upon how reading has helped them in life as they were able to give concrete examples.

Leah's story. Leah, the oldest female child interviewed at age 12, commented on how reading the biography of her favourite author had a positive effect on her career planning as it modeled behaviour that she did not want to emulate. Early on in the interview Leah stated that she liked "…to read about, like, what happens in the past, or, like, books about the future, so it's, like, what if that actually happens?" The theme of her wondering about how she would react if the things she read about in books would happen to her appears often in her answers and she explains this processing of the action during her reading in her answer to Question 11 *What kind of books and stories do you like to read? Why?* with the words: "I like to read realistic fiction and then, uhm, fantasy, sometimes…Because I can relate to what's happening in the book and then I understand what's happening, …, I can, like, imagine it happening to me…" She reveals in her answer to Question 14 *What are the most precious books in your collection?* that the books by her favourite author, Peg Kehret, are her favourite stories and in her description of one of her favourite stories by this author entitled *Escaping the Great Wave* which is about children surviving a tsunami Leah explains that "It has scenes that happened in real life and …I've never seen that before, but now I can understand what actually happens. Like, if that was, like, a real life story then from someone's perspective then I know what happens and then I like to, like, think that actually happened so, like, I know what went on…" In her answer to Question 17 Leah describes her admiration for Peg Kehret when she found out that the author had had polio with the words: "…that makes it even more interesting; like, she still writes books, even though she

polio…" and this admiration is continued in her answer to Question 18 when Leah recounts how the author had described how she had had polio as a child and had described the meanness of the nurses, so Leah had thought that she would make a difference if she were to become a nurse:

> Okay, um, so the Peg Kehret books, she was um, she had polio and it was, like, her biography about herself so she wrote all about what she, when she had polio and stuff and it helped me in my understanding what, like, polio can do to you. And I, like, kinda want to be a nurse and so, like, there were nurses in there and it helped me learn, she wrote about how mean the nurses were, and so I was, like, maybe I can make a difference and be a nice nurse. So it helped me think about, like, what I can do.

Matthew's story. Of all the child respondents Matthew (age 13) gave a clear example of how reading stories helped him in his development of coping strategies. Already in his answer to Question 3 *Describe where and when you like to read books* he admits that he likes "to read books somewhere in the evening, it helps to calm you down" indicating that he realized that he is able to regulate his emotional state by reading. In his answer to Question 11 *What kind of books and stories do you like to read? Why?* he reveals that he likes to read fictional books and books with actions because "It helps you to understand what the character in the story is doing. You can easily get an imagination of what the story character is doing at the time. And where he is going and what he will be doing." When asked about his favourite story he first mentions the books by J.R.R. Tolkien:

> There's one, there's a group of books that I had read a while ago with my mom and ah, they are think like The Hobbit and ah, J.R.R. Tolkien. Those are very fun books to read…Where, where these weak people go out on an adventure and become strong and become brave…And like the weakest thing, people get the job done in the end.He

responds to the next question *Would you recommend other people to read it?* by saying "Yes, They're very fun. Full of action. They have a message to you. It's, it's one of the best books you would probably every read." Matthew continues to explain that stories have a certain meaning to him in his response to Question 18. He begins his answer with the words "Different stories give off different morals, but they all line up almost perfectly – like, you, like, pick your friends wisely or you would want, or even the weakest can do the right thing and they all build up into one picture and it helps me in life." He then continues to explain how they have helped him and have thus held meaning for him:

> It helps me get over different obstacles and to reach my goals…There have been times when I have been bullied at school. And when I, and sometimes when I read books it helps to get a clear picture into my mind that even thought I am getting bullied, even though I don't feel too happy, there is something that I can probably do that they couldn't., or…And it would allow me to achieve my goals and not to worry too much about the bullies (*pause*). It helped me.

He concludes the interview with the statement "Well, in *Lord of the Rings*, Frodo makes some really wise choices, sometimes on his own and sometimes with other and it helped to get me to push on and to achieve my goals." These statements demonstrate how reading the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy has given some courage and insight into human nature to Matthew to be able to cope effectively with the stress caused by being bullied by focusing on his own self-worth. Recognizing that identifying with Frodo may not be the only reason that Matthew was able to reframe his response to a stressful situation of being bullied, the researcher made note of other responses to questions which demonstrated that Matthew was also very religious, as reflected in the statement "…and I am just glad that we only have one…And that he is merciful and…And

won't blast you to smithereens." Perhaps this deep religious belief further supported his sense of positive self-worth as modelled by Frodo in relation to negative personality traits he identified in his fellow classmates.

Adults' responses. For the adult respondents, Table 7 presents a thematic overview of their responses. James answered this question in the negative and drew upon practical books on topics such as gardening or how to fix things as being helpful: "No, not really. Reading stories…reading books…I've read books to help for gardening and stuff like that, books to fix vehicles…," Christina explained how reading self-help books has helped her cope with family issues:

> And then the self-help books came when we had personal issues in our family and I bought a lot of self-help books, um, again about, you know responsibility and what you can control in life. I bought tons of those, I don't know, maybe ten to fifteen books, trying to find how I was going to cope with what was happening with our family, so. Those ones, yeah, I got rid of those, because that's a time in my life that wasn't very good, but they were like really good books to have at the time and I would pick one up and read a chapter, you know, to show you that other people go through things and it's how you deal with it. George admitted his belief that "Well, they, everything you read and learn helps you with everything that you do…And helps you make decisions as to, possibly affects your decisions that you make currently and in the future.

Table 7

Can you think of a time when reading stories helped you in life? – Condensed Adult Responses by Theme

Theme	Name	Response
Life-saving	Sophia	…when I was, what, thirteen, um, I can say that books actually saved my life, because I was in a bad, bad place. I had been through several years of really serious bullying that nobody seemed to understand and ah, I was really seriously considering killing myself. I was thirteen years old, I had a plan, I had, you know, I sat up all night thinking about it and ultimately the thing that made me not do it was that there were books I hadn't read yet.
Escape/Recovery	Susan	Yup, the period of time where I was going through a depression…and there were ups and downs. So what I did is I went to garage sales and picked up a whole box full of books. I rented a cottage for ten days … and I read for a solid ten days without stopping. And that, plus the walks on the beach, the barbecues that I cooked for myself; ah, there was no television, no phone, not even a clock, okay … that helped me out of my, my period of depression. And I would say that in all my life, that was probably when it was the best…reading has always been my escape.
Escape/Recovery	Sarah	It got me through Grade 8. I took it with me every day. Once I actually like, bought a copy. It's what I read it over and over again in Grade 8. … I was being bullied and so, I had my books… it was *To catch a pirate* but the story itself didn't really help. It was just more, it was just more of a barrier to everyone else, I just kind of put it up.
Escape/Recovery	Julia	Huh, yeah (*spoken in the sense of doh!*) God. Every, every down moment or every down incident it was a way to, um escape reality… …and just gather yourself back up for the next round. … So, yeah like when [child's name] was in the hospital with his … surgery that was, like, I always had one or two books on the go just because, you could forget… Escape a little bit and it just gave you that, trying to just, you know gather yourself, all those pieces back together again and just kind of carry on.
Escape/Recovery	Eleanor	I think they always do because they take you outside of what is your norm…it takes me outside of whatever I am dealing with and able then to look back and, and deal with it. I think that's how I am saying it. Yeah, it's just an escape for me.
Escape/Recovery	Jane	Oh for sure, like, just the last few years right, like … and previous to that I had gone through (*skype static*) break-up, so books are like, my escape.
Escape/Recovery	Angela	Oh yeah, oh my goodness. Yeah, I was an only child and I was lonely and books were my only friends half the time, oh yeah. … I don't know. The school bus ride home was, I would read, you know, before the Walkman was invented. I would read…I would read and just, I guess, escape, I don't know, just escape in your imagination. That's what I did. Still do.
Escape/Recovery	Darlene	I was… I was a single mother, a single pregnant mother. Went through a very, very nasty divorce and hmm, and, and just felt pretty alone so I had one and three-quarters children and it opened up a place to go somewhere. Yeah, that would probably be the biggest impact, yeah.

Table 7 (cont'd)

Can you think of a time when reading stories helped you in life? – Condensed Adult Responses by Theme

Theme	Name	Response
Escape/Recovery	Lina	Always. … Always. There is no particular time. I mean, I think um, when I said to you, first of all, it's escape, you, you enter into another world. Um, so I think, yes, when I'm really, if I'm really upset or worried about things, then being able to immerse myself in a book and get caught up in the particular problems and issues that those people are having, gives me some distance from my own issues and problems, so, um. Reading, reading is, um I guess, in some ways, too, therapy for me.
Escape - Calming Effect	Mary	Well, I think, I think they always do in the sense that they do provide another world for you…because if you're feeling good, you can have a, read almost anything and it, it takes you away. If you're feeling stressed, it would be, it's a wonderful thing to go into another world, to escape into another world. And I know I have read books where you can't wait to get home and get back into that world. ... Inside the pages of a book. Yeah.
Escape - losing oneself	Grace	Well, I think they've always helped me actually because you kind of lose yourself in a book. You know, you're somewhere else; you're transported to another place.
For information - modeling resilient behaviour	Melissa	I really feel that if you are reading a book carefully and looking to better your own life, I really feel like there are like nuggets and gems in you know, in a well written piece of literature that can help you with what you're dealing with. You know, I think about, um, times where I've thought, wow, this all seems like it's going very poorly here, and you know, is there is going to be that proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. And then you can read a book where a character is not going through the same thing as you, but really feeling the same way you're feeling and when they press on, you feel like, hey, I can press on too, and you know. They end with a good ending, you feel like, okay, I have a hopeful good ending, you know, to the story.
For information - coping	Christina	And then the self-help books came when we had personal issues in our family and I bought a lot of self-help books, … about, you know, responsibility and what you can control in life … and I would pick one up and read a chapter, you know, to show you that other people go through things and it's how you deal with it.
For information	George	Well, they, everything you read and learn helps you with everything that you do…And helps you make decisions as to, possibly affects your decisions that you make currently and in the future.
For information	James	No, not really. Reading stories … reading books … I've read books to help for gardening and stuff like that, books to fix vehicles. … But with the internet now, it's so much easier. You just google anything and it shows up.
Leisure activity/building community with other readers	Cathy	(pause) Hm…well, growing up it was definitely a pastime. *Harry Potter* especially. I don't know. Reading it and then having friends who have read it, so it was like a common ground to talk about, something to be excited about. And then that excitement continued on when it was created into movies and still now when I am reading critical reviews of it to compare it … so something that has stayed with me the entire time.

Cathy described reading as a pastime and as a way to create community with friends as they had all read the same book and were able to discuss it and then compare it with the movies that were filmed based on the books:

> Hmm…well, growing up it was definitely a pastime. *Harry Potter* especially. I don't know. Reading it and then having friends who have read it, so it was like a common ground to talk about, something to be excited about. And then that excitement continued on when it was created into movies and still now when I am reading critical reviews of it to compare it … so something that has stayed with me the entire time.

Just like the children participants Zoe, Lucy, and Hannah, the adults recognize that both the act of reading and reading stories is a coping mechanism which allows them to mentally remove themselves, or "escape" from stressful situations giving them the necessary energy to recover and then return to deal with whatever stressors are at hand. This recognition is demonstrated by statements such as "…it takes me outside of whatever I am dealing with and able then to look back and, and deal with it" made by Eleanor, and Lina's reflection:

> [u]m, so I think, yes, when I'm really, if I'm really upset or worried about things, then being able to immerse myself in a book and get caught up in the particular problems and issues that those people are having, gives me some distance from my own issues and problems, so, um, reading, reading, is, um, I guess, in some ways, too, therapy for me.

Julia's words are even more insightful as she describes how having books on hand helped her cope with a child's surgery:

> God. Every, every down moment or every down incident it was a way to, um escape reality…and just gather yourself back up for the next round. So, yeah like when [name of child] was in the hospital with his … surgery, that was, like I always had one or two

> books on the go just because, you could forget…Escape a little bit and it just gave you that, trying to just, you know gather yourself, all those pieces back together again and just kind of carry on.

Mary and Grace described how reading stories helped them escape into different worlds by stimulating their imagination. As Mary states:

> Well, I think, I think they always do in the sense that they do provide another world for you. If you're ever stressed or…, they can take you somewhere else…I don't think there's ever a time when I wouldn't want to read, because if you're feeling good, you can have a…, read almost anything and it, it takes you away. If you're feeling stressed, it would be, it's a wonderful thing to go into another world, to escape into another world. And I know I have read books where you can't wait to get home and get back into that world.

Grace echoes the sense of getting lost in a book while reading by saying: "Well, I think they've always helped me actually because you kind of lose yourself in a book. You know, you're somewhere else; you're transported to another place."

Mirroring the boy Matthew's emotional attachment to Frodo in *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Melissa also revealed how identifying with characters in the story helped her overcome difficult times: "…and then you can read a book where a character is not going through the same thing as you, but really feeling the same way you're feeling and why they press on, you feel like, hey, I can press on too".

Sarah and Angela admitted that reading stories has helped them at either some point of their life or on a regular basis as it allowed them to "escape" from difficult situations. Sarah described that reading stories helped her to escape being bullied in Grade 8, while Angela

detailed how books were her friends when she was a child: “Oh yeah, oh my goodness. Yeah, I was an only child and I was lonely and books were my only friends half the time, oh yeah…I would read and just, I guess, escape, I don’t know, just escape in your imagination. That’s what I did. Still do.”

What follows are the stories of Susan, Darlene and Sophia, the three remaining adults whose responses to Question 18 provided the most insight in how reading does support resilience by assisting them with coping strategies and the will to carry on when faced with difficult situations. These longer narratives were created by compiling responses to questions in a chronological order and differ from the responses of the other adults as they provide more details on how reading has supported them throughout their lives.

Susan’s story. Susan (age 63) had revealed in her earliest responses that she was a reclusive and that reading “…has always been a saviour…sort of my best friend.” Throughout the interview she describes herself as a “voracious reader” and reads a wide variety of both fiction and non-fiction books explaining her passion with “I just read for the sake of reading.” She does admit that “I think what happens is…the minute I’m interested in something, I mean, I’m, I’m obsessed” explaining that”…if I’m going to be reading an author, I want to read the whole series if I really like it.” She described how she was able to apply her learning about different cultures and people with the words “…what’s fun about it is that I’ll read the book, I’ll learn something and then when I have a friend from these places it becomes a conversation piece which is kinda neat.”

Susan’s response to Question 18 echoed Angela’s description of reading as a way to escape when she was a child: “I also came from a very dysfunctional family and reading was my, uhm, escape and ah, if I didn’t feel like doing something, I just acted up and I was sent to me

room to read and that is how I read *Gone with the Wind* you know, …reading has always been my escape." However, she had begun her answer with detailing how reading stories had helped her through a period of depression in her life as a single mother:

> Yup, the period of time where I was going through a depression, okay, uhm, I raised a son by myself and there were ups and downs. So what I did is I went to garage sales and picked up a whole box full of books. I rented a cottage for ten days. It rained for six, okay. I had company on one of the sunny days and ran out of books, during those ten days and went and got some more and I read for a solid ten days without stopping. Okay. And that, plus the walks on the beach, the barbecues that I cooked for myself; ah, there was no television, no phone, not even a clock, okay. Um, that helped me out of my, my period of depression. And I would say that in all my life, that was probably when it was the best.

The solitude of staying in the cottage with no technological distractions gave Susan the necessary environment to literally indulge in her favourite pastime of reading for pleasure. By escaping the here and now and removing herself albeit temporarily from her preoccupations, both physically and mentally, this gave Susan the time necessary to reflect upon her life and what her next steps would be.

Darlene's story. Darlene (age 54) is also a single mother and a self-confessed reading addict: "I read every single day, sometime. I will make time." to which she adds later "I don't read because I have to, I read because I want to…" She admitted that she preferred to read fiction over non-fiction, particularly historical fiction because "…if you look at history you can, you can make tweaks for the future." She also revealed that she loves children's books not so much because of the stories but of the interaction with the children when she reads to them: "I pick

very interactive books with kids and love seeing the joy when they know the words, when they can sing the words, when they can stomp them. They don't know how to read, but they are reading." Darlene realizes that her world is small and that she likes to learn from books about the world:

> …my world is so small, It's so small and if I can read about Afghanistan or if I can read about Mexico or I can, I can be in the footsteps of somebody going on a journey, or I can be an armchair traveler and learn about the world and the people and, and maybe learn a little bit about myself…

Echoing her reason for reading books as learning about new things and different places in the world, Darlene had tears in her eyes when she revealed in her response to Question 18 how reading stories has helped her by taking her away from a difficult personal situation in the here and now:

> Mm, yeah. Many times. Oh, this gets personal (*tears in her eyes*). Reading stories…I was…I was a single mother, a single pregnant mother. Went through a very, very nasty divorce and hmm, and, and just felt pretty alone so I had one and three-quarters children and it opened up a place to go somewhere. Yeah, that would probably be the biggest impact, yeah.

Sophia's story. The most gripping admission to Question 18 *Can you think of a time when reading stories helped you in life?* came from Sophia (age 51) who revealed how having unread books in her room actually literally saved her life. Sophia admitted in her very first answer that she equated reading books and stories with breathing, indicating that it was a necessity to sustain her in life. When choosing a book she would browse which she describes as follows: "So I would go into that section and just start looking for something that I haven't seen

before. Um, read the back, flip to the middle. Read the first page; if it's gripping me, then it's a safe bet, yup." Sophia is also a serious re-reader explaining that

> …I think those ones, the rereading books, I think the feeling, because I know what's going to happen in these, I think there's a sen…what I feel is great comfort. I'm, you know, I'm, I can fall into the story, um, I know it all turns out fine, which is good,, for bedtime, and, and there's, there's, I think I feel great comfort.

Sophia admitted that she loves all kinds of fiction, in particular mysteries and histories in particular how the story unfolds and because with mysteries "…it's often the puzzle."

After first answering Question 18 with a simple "Yes." the researcher probed with "Can you give me an example?" to which Sophia responded as follows:

> Sure, um, I think, well, I mean, I can, when I was thirteen, um I can say that books actually saved my life, because I was in a bad, bad place. I had been through several years of really serious bullying that nobody seemed to understand and, ah, I was really seriously considering killing myself. I was thirteen years old, I had a plan, I had, you know, I sat up all night thinking about it and ultimately the thing that made me not do it was that there were books I hadn't read yet. I was not at an age where I could recognize that anybody, that there were any relationships that mattered. Right, like did I think my parents loved me? No, of course I didn't. You know, so, but it was, it was knowing that there were books in fact, sitting there on the desk that I hadn't read yet, that made me not do it. So there...

Sophia's reflection of how having unread books literally saved her life also reveals how she realizes now that her belief that no one cared about her was false and that she could have turned to her parents or a friend. Instead she defined the relationship she had with the unread books at

the time that she was thirteen as being akin to having a relationship with another human being, reflecting her earlier assertion where she equates reading to breathing:" I think because books and stories have been part of my life since, since the beginning and I just can't imagine,…I can't imagine being without them."

Intrathematic Analysis of Responses for Interview Section C

After Question 18, Interview Section C continued with questions about a story that was important to the reader and whether or not the reader was able to relate either to the main character(s), the secondary character(s), or the setting of the story. These questions attempted to ascertain whether anything that could be or had been read by the participants would make or had made a lasting effect on the reader and if so, what the effect could or had been.

Answers to Question 19 *Tell me about a story that is important to you* varied from children not having a story that is important to them (Liam), to short answers that only consisted of story titles like *Sleeping Beauty* (Zoe) and *The Hobbit* (Anna). Chloe and Noah described how the stories that they read as young children (e.g., *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Chloe) and *Dr. Seuss* (Noah)) are important to them as they reminded them of when they were little.

Tyler commented that he "…actually can't think of a book that is much more important to me than others…Um, because once I read them, they seem, like, the most important book that I have read" demonstrating that this child values all books and stories equally.

Aidan admitted that while "…I don't think that there are any really important," he does consider those books that had been passed down in his family and that he has not yet read as important ones:

> Yeah, they aren't mine, but they are important. They're books that I get that are there when I need them. Well, I haven't read them, but they are…but it's hard to explain them,

> but they are the books that I was talking about…like the books that we've kept for a long time.

Matthew, Emma, Noah, Hannah, Ryan and Michael gave the title of the story or book and then described why the story is important to them. The children all described situations in the books that had stayed with them long after the reading has been completed. For example, Matthew described how reading *The Hobbit* helped "to get me to push on and to achieve my goals,", while Emma talked about how the main protagonist in the story *Sincerely Sophie* went through a hard time and how she had not wanted to deal with it at first, "but in the end she did deal with it and it all became, really became good." It was the interaction between the characters in the book and how those characters dealt with difficult situations and how they were resolved that stayed with the children. Noah described how the plot of a certain Dr. Seuss story had resonated with him:

> I liked the Dr. Seuss stories when I was younger. Um, *The Pants with Nobody Inside Them*. I really like that one…It's, it's just, like, the pants are all lonely and then there, everybody is afraid of them, but in the end, he gets a friend and they are all happy and biking around. So…

Hannah described her story with the words: "It's one about a little fairy and she flies away from home because she doesn't think she's loved and then she realizes that she actually is." Ryan gave the following answer without actually giving specific reasons on why the story is important to him personally:

> Important…probably the most important book in my perspective, out of fantasy books, probably is…*The Mysterious Benedict Society*. Because it's a very, very good book and it's easy to read. It's fun. It's a group of orphans and runaways that come to this man

> named Nicholas Benedict and he kind of trains them to defeat the Drop the Curtain. I am not going to reveal the whole story line…It's a fairly new book and…it's very, very entertaining.

Michael gave the most personal answer as the story that is important to him was a story, *The Landlady*, to which he had written a sequel. It had been a school assignment and he goes on to describe the plot of the story for which he had created the sequel for which he had received praise from his teachers.

The responses by the adults revealed titles of stories and books that that had not yet been mentioned, but had slowly come to the forefront while the adults were continuing to reflect on the previous questions that had been posed to them. Susan explained that the story of the *Le Petit Prince* is important to her because of "when he talks about the rose, and he says that they all have thorns, but the only reason that one is special is because you take care of it on a regular basis and it then becomes your rose," emphasizing how when you take care of something the act of nurturing brings satisfaction. Mary's response was more like a stream of consciousness spoken aloud: "I don't know. There's a book that I haven't mentioned. I'm not sure if it was important to me but I can't get it out of my head and that was *Sophie's Choice*."

Sophia gave a detailed explanation of the importance of the story *Potiki* to her "…why it's important to me is that it, that it, tells stories of families and of a really unusual, it's a really unusual kind of flexible family structure…and they kind of navigate inside this in really, really wonderful ways." Sarah described how with the story *To Catch a Pirate* it was not the story itself that helped her in any way, it was more the act of reading a physical book that created "…just more of a barrier to everyone else. I just kind of put it up" detailing how she created a physical

barrier between herself and her bullies when at school by having the book in her hands and reading that particular story.

Lina, Jane, Melissa, and Grace were unable to pick just one story that was important to them as each story resonates with them and that to these adults all stories are important because "…they all contribute to who you end up becoming" (Jane). Grace explained that all books are important to her and "[o]ne thing I cannot do is throw a book away…It's almost like killing somebody. They all have their personalities, don't they?"

George and Angela did not have a story that was important to them while Julia, Eleanor and Christina revealed how stories from their personal lives are the important stories for them. Julia explains that the story that is important to her,

> …it's a book that [name of child] did for his [siblings]…So he wrote it and he illustrated it, um, I mean, it was just a simple ABC book, but he did it all himself and that was his Christmas present for one year. Yeah, that is by far the best book that I have."

Eleanor describes how she considers her life story as the story that is important to her: "I can't think of one that I would say is important to me. I guess my life story…Yeah, I guess what I've been through, my life story that would be important."

Christina's story. Christina revealed that it is her family history that is the story that is important to her. In her answer to the previous question she had revealed that she is related on her maternal side to the Donnelly's clan and that she was interested in finding out more about them:

> I bought all the books about our past, um, we're part of the Black Donnelly's on my mom's side…So we went to Toronto, went to the big bookstore, and we bought every book that was written about the Black Donnelly's. And I read those. And they all have

> different versions of the story. We were not very good, but they did do bad things to them too.

She continues her personal narrative with her response to Question 18 by describing how she discovered her lineage:

> Well, the Black Donnelly's, my grandmother never spoke of them. Um, so when she died, my mom told me about them and that we are direct descendants from them and I said, you know, I didn't really believe her, but then I got her Bible, my grandmother's Bible, and there was all the clippings of the actual people, that were, as they passed away, their newspaper obituaries, and they were the same names as in the book, so I believe her now, because a lot of people lay claim to fame that they are Black Donnelly's but there weren't many males left…Because they murdered them all. So um, that, those books are important to me. I've loaned them out to different family members and have gotten them back. Just because, yeah, you know, educate them on where we came from. And you know, to me, it's important to know. So, those books are important to me to have.

Christina continues her personal narrative in her answer to Question 20 by adding to her family history, which is the story which is important to her and to which she relates, with the following words:

> Well, the Black Donnelly's do, because its, some of my relatives were acting strangely, and you would wonder, you would get that feeling, you know, they were hiding something. They didn't want everyone to know that they were descendants from the Black Donnelly's and the town didn't like it neither, because they had a big, um… [*Monument?*]. Yeah, and it said, it gets vandalized all the time. And the time, it was the first mass murder in Canada and the town got together, even the sheriff got involved and

> went from house to house and murdered all of the sons of the mother and, when they had the gravestone up, it got vandalized. It used to say "Murdered by" … not one of them went to jail, even though they had a witness. And so, when they put it back up, they said you can't say "murdered" and all this and they didn't want them putting that and they don't want anything to do with them. So sort of like a shameful thing. And, uhm, and religion of course is involved. But yeah, so once my mom explained that, and that, you know, grandma used to not want to talk about that stuff, it's important to me to recognize where we came from and that it is part of our background.
>
> So, yeah, that's the only story that really, really would be something that I would remember, the different versions of it, because nobody else is talking about it, except the people who wrote the books.

As she reveals in the last sentence, in wanting to find out more about her family history, especially since some of her family members did not want to talk about this part of the family history, Christina was forced to turn to books written by authors who are not part of the family to reconstruct her past.

Question 20 *Does the story relate to you in some way?* was not asked of Matthew, Tyler, Aidan, and Liam as the answers given to the previous question gave enough material to answer this question as well. While Chloe, Noah, Olivia, Zoe, Hannah, and Anna stated that the story did not relate to them at all, Emma, Michael, Lucy, Leah, and Ryan explained how the story related to them. Emma described how a romantic situation between characters in the book where one of the main characters likes a boy, but the boy liked someone else paralleled a situation with her friends in real life, where one of her female friends liked a boy, but the boy liked Emma.

Michael explained how having a sense that when something is too perfect, it is too good to be true so you should always "prepare for the unexpected." Lucy had created her own story as the answer for the previous question and so that story related to her as she had made it up and she had been using her thoughts and words to create a possible conversation between characters. Leah had made the connection between reading the biography of her favourite author and her future career path and Ryan revealed how one of the main characters in the story is observant and how his Dad "…keeps saying that I am very observant."

Of the adults, James, Sophia and Sarah answered this question in the negative explaining that "No, I don't think so…they're just fun to read" (James), "I don't think particularly" (Sophia) and "No, I don't think it really related to me…it just kind of helped me imagine other situations that I could be living, I guess" (Sarah).

Susan was able to relate the story of the *Le Petit Prince* to her life by reflecting:

> Um, yes, it does in the sense that it talks about the natural beauty and how we can see beauty in anything if we really want to and it's really up to us, you know. So that you can be living a very simple life, you could have a very simple home, but if you look around, you'd think "Okay, well I got this at the garage sale, this is from my grandchildren, that's from my friend, that's my friend…" and it basically means that everything warms your heart because it means something… Other people might call it your museum, but you call it, it's your haven, it's your sanctuary.

Julia admitted that the story written by her child relates to her values since "…I wanted my kids to be non-materialistic in a way, you know, and that things that come from the heart are

way more important, have more meaning for people than store-bought stuff and he got that…you know."

Eleanor whose story that is important to her is her life story explains that "It's your history, right and I think that's the big thing too…We are all writing our story as we go along…We're all doing our memoir, eh…"

Darlene, who had discussed the book *Ragged Company* as a story that is important to her, relates this story to her life by stating "I deal with homeless people every single day. Every day. And they are people. And I see them treated not as…so, yeah."

Angela and Lina related to the story that was important to them on an emotional level as it gave them more insight of what it is like to live life as a woman. Angela reveals after her reading *Madame Tout-le-Monde* "I guess so, I mean, the characters are women and I guess on a certain level I relate," while Lina, who had described the action in the short story *The Torn Lace*, reflects

> It relates to me in that ah, I think I'm very aware of how women's lives have changed and it makes me think about you know, what my mother's and my grandmother's, and female relatives all the way down the line, what their life was like, right. It just, it makes me aware of how the world has changed and perhaps needs to change some more.

Mary made the observation that rereading the *Chronicles of Narnia* as an adult she has discovered a new perspective on how the children were treated in the book by the adults:

> Because I often think about the children coming back and trying to explain that they have been gone for years, and not being believed. You can remember that sensation when adults didn't believe what you were saying, because that happens to children….I mean,

we do disbelieve children sometimes and dismiss them. And they're telling us the truth. So, that's what you see when you read it as an adult. You see if from the other side.

Lucy and Ryan answered Question 21 *Are you in some way like the main character?* In the affirmative, but were unable to articulate reasons why and how. Emma and Michael reluctantly indicated that they were in some way like the main character in a very tenuous way by using very circumspect wording – Emma described that "in some ways, ah, like, sometimes we have friend fights…" referring to action that was happening in the novel to the main protagonist. Michael stated that he was "maybe" like the main character because he has "…always been quite suspicious and curious of some things", which is very reminiscent of the detective who is the main protagonist in the story that is important to this child.

Matthew, Noah, Olivia, Zoe, Hannah and Anna answered negatively with very short answers that they were not in any way like the main character. Leah gave a more detailed answer explaining why she did not see herself as the main character: "No. No, she, because she is the one who had polio, but, like, we both, but she, like, we weren't really similar like she is different than me because she wrote all about herself…"

This question was not asked of Tyler, Aidan and Liam as answers to previous questions indicated that the children did not have an important story to which they could relate and thus the researcher felt that an answer to this particular question would not be forthcoming.

Of the adults, Mary and Cathy identified with one of the main characters in their story and it is interesting to note here that both adults referred to the *Chronicles of Narnia*. While Mary saw herself more as Lucy because "…she got sort of a bit dismissed, but she really was the

one that was trying the best, yeah, and I want clothes like Lucy as well," Cathy saw herself more like Susan "…because she is like the big sister of the four of them and I am the big sister of four of them and there is some connection to her and her responsibility."

Susan, Lina, Sarah, Eleanor, Jane, Christina, Melissa, Angela, Sophia, Darlene, and James did not see themselves specifically in the main character of their story. While Darlene explains "No, no, just um, taken away while I was reading it as, you know, very, um soothing, to escape again and read that book…I didn't really relate to the main character, just like, you know he was trying to save the world, and stuff like that." Melissa does admit,

> I guess so, sure. You know, you can relate to someone else's, um failures, you can also relate to someone else's victories. And um, you can often see in someone else's life your own downfalls better than you can see in your own life….I think you can get behind those emotions and understand a little bit of what that person is going through.

The children Chloe, Noah, Hannah, Leah and Anna all answered Question 22 *Are you in some way like the secondary characters in the story?* affirmatively: Chloe saw herself more like Piglet in the *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories, trying to help Eeyore find his tail; while Noah described how he felt like he was more like the duck in the *Dr. Seuss* Story as he became friends with the main protagonist of whom everyone else was scared:

> Um, I might be like the duck guy or whatever, I don't really know, the guys in Dr. Seuss. I don't know what to call them. He was scared of the pants. Um, they became friends and went bike riding.

Hannah recounted how she felt she was more the main protagonist's friend, who was a fairy, because "[s]he's the one who convinces her that she like, actually is loved by a lot of

people." While Leah wanted to be like the nice nurse in the story, Anna felt like she was a little bit like the secondary characters in *The Hobbit,* like one of the dwarves but was not able to give a specific example.

Emma "Not really," Olivia "No" and Zoe "Nope" did not see themselves in another character of the story. And the question was not asked of Matthew, Tyler, Aidan, Liam, Michael, Lucy and Ryan as the answers to previous questions had already provided an answer to this question, or the researcher felt that it was no longer appropriate to ask this question given the way the interview was progressing.

Of the adults, Susan explained how the characters in her story, *Le Petit Prince,* were being creative and she reflected that "And I never thought I was creative until I was in my fifties," while Eleanor admitted that "I was able to relate but not as the main character, more as the supporting character" in the books that she had read as a teenager such *Go ask Alice,* but did not provide any more insight. Darlene commented that "…I think that there's little pieces of all of us in, all of them…" referring to the characters in the story *Ragged Company* that is important to her inferring that she can relate to all of the characters in certain instances.

Mary, Lina, Sarah, Cathy, Angela, Sophia, James, and Grace all answered in the negative and stated that they did not see themselves reflected in the secondary characters.

Chloe, Michael, Hannah and Leah answered Question 23 *What about the setting of the story? Does it remind you of your home or your school life?* by describing how the setting reminded them of their home life: Chloe, who related to the *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories, admitted that "it reminds me of my house … because it was all in the wild, it was all, our backyard was

the wild," while Michael described how the setting in the story *The Landlady* by Roald Dahl reminds him of when he has bad days in the style of *Murphy's Law* – "like, when I have a bad day it rains, or when I forget to, like, so I forget to do my homework so I have to do it in the morning and the bus comes late." Hannah referred to the setting of the fairy story which is set in a magical forest and that reminds her of "…sort of my home, because, well, my room, because there is, like, a bunch of cool stuff in there…, like, a bunch of teddy bears and, like, drawings that I've drawn and other stuff…" and Leah related a parallel story of how when she was in a hospital her parents came to visit her and brought her things to the hospital to make her more comfortable and were asking if she was okay:

> Um, yeah, okay so there is one time when she is, like, was in the hospital and her parents came in, and, um, came in and gave her a bunch of, like stuff, like toys and stuff, and then I remember, one time when I, my dad's medication, I was in the hospital and so, like, my mom and dad came in and they were, like, "oh, are you okay?"

Zoe admitted that the setting of the story reminded her of her school life – she had said that the fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty* was an important story for her and she liked "that there are, like, these big bushes of thorns that come up…well, it guards the castle and everything and is pretty cool. …At school there is a big fence around the school yard," equating the fence with the bushes.

Lucy detailed how when she plays outside at recess or "outside, or when I am going outside to play…if I am outside just me and my friends, I can jump, just jump around, play around, get all really wild" paralleling the action of the ender dragon in the online Minecraft adventures she had been creating in response to the last three questions of the interview.

Emma, Noah, Ryan, and Anna answered in the negative that the setting of the story did not remind them of either their home or school life while the question was not asked of Matthew, Tyler, Aidan, Liam, and Olivia as answers to this question were no longer relevant given the negative answers to previous questions about having an important story.

Of the adult participants Susan, Sarah, Julia, Jane, George, Darlene, and James were not asked this question as answers to previous questions made this question superfluous, while the interview with Darlene was interrupted by a work colleague with an urgent request and ended abruptly before this question was asked as the interview as being held at Darlene's place of work.

Lina, Christina, and Grace answered the question in the negative. The remaining six adults, Mary, Eleanor, Cathy, Melissa, Angela, and Sophia, gave various explanations on how the setting of the story reminded them exclusively of their home life: Mary described how "…I just wanted to be in that frightfully jolly household," while Eleanor admitted that it reminded her of her social life when she was a teenager as the stories were set in high school. Cathy explained that the forest in the *Chronicles of Narnia* reminded her of camping: "…being in the forest, and exploring and seeing different things.", while Melissa revealed that she likes reading books that are very heavy into characterization helping her relate to the story and the characters by drawing comparisons between the characters in the books and people in her family or her social circles:

> …I think we all find something is reminiscent of home when you, you're focusing on characterization, you can kind of see your siblings in some of these characters, or yourself or your parents or you neighbours. There's something that reminds you of them.

> This person is doubting, and that person, is, you know striving, and this person, is… And yeah, … and then there I am, you know, with maybe too much to say, or…

Angela drew upon her love of history and stated "…so, I guess any story that I read, I feel more connected to if it's like, like a history that I know," while Sophia was able to draw a favourable comparison of her family dynamics to the family dynamics presented in *Potiki*, the story that was important to her:

> there is something quite lovely about the way they, I think maybe this is the thing that I appreciate, is their, their, their construction of family that is very open and fluid um, which certainly I kind of connect with given our, my odd, our odd family structure. Um, and so, I think there is that. Um, yeah, that might be it.

Interthematic Summary of Responses for Interview Section C

7 children and 13 adults stated that reading stories has helped them in life in a tangible way and they gave concrete examples of how stories have helped – either by having the characterization in a story give them the insight to handle bullies or how they regarded the act of reading itself, and not necessarily a certain book or narrative, as therapy and a self-regulating coping mechanism as defined by Shanker (2016) to deal with stressors of the moment. This finding demonstrates that both the children and the adults recognize that the act of reading is an important tool with which they are able to mitigate the negative effects of situations that could elicit stressful reactions. This is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Both children and adults also reflected on the general knowledge that they gained about life by reading as helping them. These educational outcomes are consistent research published by Moyer (2007) and Ross (1999). Moyer (2007) refers to this knowledge gathering as "incidental information acquisition" (68) which she further defines as "information that is gathered from

leisure reading material that at some point becomes useful to the reader and results in some type of learning experience (educational outcomes)." (p. 68). By extension it could be stated that the educational outcomes would manifest themselves in either a shift in thinking about a certain thing or even a concrete action supported by what had been read. As George states "Well, they [books and stories], everything you read and learn helps you with everything that you do…and helps you make decisions as to,…possibly affects your decisions that you make currently and in the future."

Of note is the fact that 7 children did not think that reading stories helps you in life. Tyler and Noah responded after long pauses by saying that they could not think of any stories that could help in life, while Liam and Anna categorically stated "no, not really." Aidan explained "I don't think reading ever or really has [heavy static]…I don't think reading really has helped me much…Because, like, I mostly learned all this stuff I know from school." Ryan reiterated that he read for entertainment: "Hm, [pause] I don't think so…I mean, it's just, it's fun. That's why I read." And Olivia did not answer the question at all. This lack of being able to discern and formulate a direct connection by these children between reading can be explained by the fact that Matthew and Leah are the oldest male and female children participants and developmentally have moved into adulthood in their ability to reflect more critically upon their reading experience (Petersen & Leffert, 1995, p. 299).

Those children and adults who were able to name a story that was important to them were also able to explain why these stories were important to them by demonstrating how they had made connections between the story and its characters and their own personal lives (Alexander et al., 2001). Further questions asking them to specifically explain if they related either to the main or secondary characters revealed that more of the child readers saw themselves reflected in the

secondary characters that were supporting the main character. These children subsequently described how they saw themselves more of the friend helping the main character achieve their potential reflecting the development of social conscience and empathy as outlined by Howard (2011). In contrast, the adult readers were able to more critically assess the actions of the main protagonist or recognized pieces of themselves or people that they know in other characters. This observed difference in identification with characters in a story based on age can be explained by the increased level of maturity of the adults which along with an increased store of secondary knowledge and experiences and reflects more clearly the *double stance* of readers encountering fiction as described by Maine and Waller (2011) when referencing Harding (1962):

> [Harding] argues for a "participant" mode, where the reader imaginatively shares the world as seen through the eyes of characters and is involved in the action; and a simultaneous "onlooker" or "spectator" mode where more detached evaluation about what is being read takes place. (p. 362)

This combination of active participation with the story alongside simultaneous evaluation of what is happening in the story and a resulting self-realization is captured by Melissa with her words: "you can often see in someone else's life your own downfalls better than you can see in your own life."

While only four children were able to give examples of how the story under discussion related to their personal lives, only four adults responded in the negative. This difference in being able to relate to the story one is reading could be reflective of the lack of maturity and self-reflection found in the children while the adults were much more easily able to draw parallels between the story and their own personal lives (Petersen & Leffert, 1995, p. 299).

Three of the four children that had answered affirmatively and given examples on how they related to the story also identified with the main character in the story and gave explanations on how they saw themselves reflected in the actions or personality of the main character. Interestingly only two adults admitted hesitantly that they were in some way like the main character and were very careful in how they chose their words, reflecting that they related more with what the main character was experiencing and feeling rather than the actual personality of the character. This was reflected by Sophia's words "…if you're thinking one to one matches to character, no, not a bit."

What is of note in the children's responses is that the four children who saw themselves reflected in the secondary characters had not indicated previously that they either related to the story or the main character of the story. This may be reflective of their personal preferences in identifying with characters whereby they identify more with the secondary, or helping characters, then the main characters. In contrast, only two adults saw themselves reflected in the secondary characters of the story that was important to them but did not give any further explanation.

Finally, the majority of responses from both the children and adults revealed that the setting of the important stories reminded them overwhelmingly of their home life, or their social life, and not so much of either their school or work life.

Summary of all the results

In reviewing the interthematic summaries for the three sections of the interview, the following main themes were identified for the children, for the adults and subsequently across both sets of respondents. Table 8 provides a summary of these themes:

Table 8

Summary of Main Themes in Responses given by Children and Adults

Main themes children	**Main themes adults**	**Main themes overall**
"Yes" to reading	"Yes" to reading	Avid readers because of sample
Fiction most popular	Fiction most popular	Same choice of reading material
Book selection depends on mood	Book selection depends on mood	Trend starts in childhood
Individual reasons to choose a book	Individual reasons to choose a book	Book choice reflective of individuality
Half of the children were able to relate to book	More critical reflection of how action in book could relate to them	Increased identification with storyline/action/characters over lifetime because of increasing life experience and thus secondary/world memory
Fiction as preferred genre	Fiction & Non-fiction	Broader reading material with maturity
Storyline stimulates imagination	Storyline stimulates imagination	Same engagement of imagination
Book choice stimulated by main characters/series	Book choice stimulated by specific stories	Adults more selective as they are drawn more to the experiences of the characters
Precious books have specific titles not mentioned before	Precious books because of memories	Adults have created relationships with books
Precious books passed down in family	Precious books passed down in family	Same relationship building with books
Favourite stories as determined by child reader	Favourite stories are stories read as children	Lifelong influence of having read stories as children – adults may reread to gain new perspectives/make new connections
Everyone has different tastes	Everyone has different tastes	Individual factor
Reading for educational outcomes	Reading for educational outcomes	As outlined by Ross (1999) and Moyer (2007)
Identifying with secondary characters	Critically assessing actions of main protagonist	Increased identification with main characters' experiences as life experience increases over lifetime
Only half of the children said reading books helped them	All adults said reading books helped them	Progressive reliance on reading as readers move from childhood into adulthood
Only four children related story to personal life	Only four adults could not relate the story to personal life	Increased identification with characters because of lived experience
Identification with characters	Identification with feelings and experiences of the characters	Adults were able to better articulate how they relate to the characters
Setting reminded readers of home/social life	Setting reminded readers of home/social life	Setting not reminiscent of work or school life – focus on interpersonal relationships

These main themes present a progression of the reader moving from childhood to adulthood as shown in the deepening connection and identification with the story and the experiences of the characters by the adults because of increased life experience and secondary

memory (Graesser & Clark, 1985). What is of note is the fact that the choice of fiction as the preferred genre, the engagement of the imagination and the relationship established with books that had been passed down in the family is already evident in childhood. The progression therefore presents itself in the increasing identification with the feelings and experiences of characters in the books by the adults as their life experiences increase.

The thematic analysis of the responses by the child and adult participants also revealed the following research finding in response to the main research question *How does the reading of text-based narratives (in children's literature) support the development of resilience in children (ages 10-13 years)*?: both children and adults use certain books and stories in conjunction with the act of reading itself as a self-regulating coping mechanism as defined by Shanker (2010). The responses by the children and adults both reveal that they derive comfort and pleasure either from specific books or from simply the act of reading itself to offset or escape daily stressors. Of particular note is that while children recognize the modeling of positive behaviour of certain characters, adults are more easily able to empathize with the feelings and experiences of characters. As both the act of reading, in general, and the reading of narratives, in particular, have not been described in the literature with the terminology of being a coping mechanism, the application of concepts and terminology from one field of study to a concept in another field of study provides an interdisciplinary link between the fields of literary theory, education, reader-response theory, library science and bibliotherapy on the one hand, and cognitive psychology and resilience studies on the other hand.

Since books and the narratives contained therein are cultural products, the act of reading can be said to be a process whereby children are intrinsically exposed to culture (Vadeboncoeur, 2003) through the narrative which provides an answer to the first research sub-question *How do*

children learn about culture via reading narratives? Furthermore, in reviewing the responses given by both the children and the adults, it becomes apparent that for these readers the reading of narratives becomes a "cultural resource" (Swidler, 1986, p. 281) providing an answer for the subsequent sub-question *What does it mean for them?* explaining that this type of cultural resource "anchor[s] the strategies of action people have developed" (Swidler, 1986, p. 281). The process whereby a cultural resource provides a strategy of action can be seen both in the responses of the children, such as those provided by Matthew (age 13) describing how he explicitly uses and applies the behaviour modeled in the *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* books to deal with instances of being bullied. It can also be seen in the responses of both those children and adults who recognize that the act of reading is an escape from either having to do an unpleasant chore such as homework or washing dishes or from facing a situation that can cause for the individual reader, such as homework or having a child undergo surgery. This recognition and the resulting action of turning to reading is a strategy by which these readers are able to cope and reflect their ego-resiliency (Block & Block, 1980 as cited in Klohnen, 1996, p. 1067), demonstrating that a link between reading narratives and resilience can be made. This provides an answer for the second research sub-question *Is there a Link between Reading Narratives and Resilience*? A detailed discussion of these research findings is presented in the next chapter along with how they relate to current literature in the fields of education, cognitive psychology, bibliotherapy, reader-response theory, narrative studies and library science.

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Chapter 5: Discussion

After a brief description of the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis, the chapter provides answers to the research sub-questions and a summary of the main research findings while referencing both the results presented in Chapter 4 and the literature review discussed in Chapter 2. It then discusses how the findings contribute to current scholarship in the field and concludes with a discussion of limitations and directions for future research.

This interdisciplinary thesis was undertaken with both child and adult participants and the discussion which follows combines the theories and findings from a variety of disciplinary fields such as education, library science, bibliotherapy, reader-response, cognitive psychology, human development and resilience studies to fill the identified void in published research between reading books and stories for pleasure and developing resilience competencies in children as they move into adulthood by integrating already existing knowledge from these disciplines. As the current research examined how an everyday activity affects human development, Moran's (2001) statement fittingly describes the research under discussion and emphasizes its interdisciplinary nature.

> [t]he study of everyday life is thus interdisciplinary not simply because it encompasses material overlooked by the existing disciplines, but because it forms a kind of connecting glue which shows how these established systems of thought are ultimately related to each other,... (p. 68)

The analysis of the children's responses was approached via the lens of the discipline of education, which views narrative as a pedagogical tool (Coulter, Michael, & Poynor, 2007) and was formulated using this perspective to uncover if and how the interviewee would view this meaning-making as becoming part of his/her self-identity as expressed via actions. While three

children recognized that the act of reading helped calm them down when they were very stressed, one child demonstrated this process by explaining the process of getting concrete examples of how to behave while reading a particular book and how this knowledge helped give the child the confidence to not let bullies undermine his self-confidence and to show strength in their presence. Another child also demonstrated this process by positively reframing the child's career choice and consciously choosing to "…make a difference and be a nice nurse. So it helped me to think about like what I can do."

However, in analyzing the responses given by the children it is interesting to note that the responses of the five children who answered the question affirmatively and were able to provide an example of how reading for pleasure has helped them were more reflective and looking into the past than forward-looking as can be seen by the verb choice and verb tense in their responses, such as "…there have been times…" (Matthew) and "…it helped me…" (Leah) This was not expected as the researcher had expected the children to project how something that they read could be helpful in life. This discrepancy could be explained by the fact that because the children's sample consisted mostly of avid readers these particular children had already gathered a basic level of lived experience, or secondary memory (Graesser & Clark, 1995) from which to draw upon for their responses as they were able to critically assess the value of stories and identify those that had made more of an impact on them. This can also be further explained by the fact that Matthew and Leah are the oldest male and female child participants and have developmentally moved into early adolescence on their way to adulthood in their ability to reflect more critically upon their reading experience (Dashiff, 2000; Petersen & Leffert, 1995; Weber et al., 1994).

In contrast to this analytical approach taken with the responses provided by the children, the personal narratives of the adults were analyzed via the lens of autobiographical ethnography, as adults reflecting on life experiences are giving meaning to these experiences via personalized re/constructions. Their responses to the individual questions created a narrative describing parts of their life story and are recognized to be constructed versions of reality. As such, they are also influenced by the social context in which the individual adult resides since narratives should not be viewed as isolated occurrences as they are intricately woven by and into the social construction of the self of the narrator (Anderson, 2006; Bowman, 2006; Bruner, 2004). This recognition that memories are never truly reflective of events in the past creates challenges with conducting narrative research with adults when asking them to remember past events. This challenge is described by Elliott (2006) as follows:

> One widely recognized disadvantage with using a retrospective research design to collect information about individuals' lives is that people may not remember the past accurately enough to provide good-quality data. While some authors have argued that recall is not a major problem for collecting information about dates such as the beginning and end of jobs, periods in higher education and training, marriages, births, etc., other research suggests that individuals may have difficulty remembering dates accurately or may prefer not to remember unfavourable episodes or events in their lives. (p. 66)

To reduce the probability of inaccurate recall of events in the past, the analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions in the interview involved a qualitative mode of analysis, more specifically narrative analysis centered within narrative research, defined as

> …not necessarily to determine a 'true' picture of events, but rather to explore such things as how the individual has made sense of these events, their attitude toward them, what

> meanings the events hold for them, and how these feelings came to be. (Greenlagh & Wengrat, 2008, p. 244)

The researcher did not ask for specific dates for certain events around reading books and stories for pleasure, instead respecting that "[e]ach individual is unique, yet what we seek in narrative research is some understanding of the patterns that cohere among individuals and the aspects of lived experience that differentiate" (Josselson, 2006, p.5).

Significance of Research Findings

In reviewing the statements made in the literature review section of Chapter 2 which describe how culture can be said to be both constructed by and transmitted through the narrative of children's literature, the first sub-question *How do children learn about culture via reading narratives and what does this mean for them?*, can be answered by looking at the responses of both children, such as Matthew, and adults, such as Mary. Their comments describe a supporting relationship between the act of reading and the reader and define a process whereby the exposure to a "strategy of action," (Swidler, 1986) or the modeling of a certain character trait portrayed within the narrative can result in an actual lived action or of an adoption of a certain character trait (Pals, 2006). This can be seen in the case of the early adolescent Matthew who had read both *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and recognized that the main protagonist who could be described as being shorter than an average human being was nevertheless able to defeat beings that were much bigger in size than he. Matthew's reflections "…you, like, pick your friends wisely…or even the weakest can do the right thing…they all build up into one picture and it helps me in life."

While reading can be viewed "…as a situational activity, influenced by personal preferences, past experience, and current activity or context" (Maine & Waller, 2011, p. 358),

and is an action performed by an individual, it is nevertheless conducted in a social setting and influenced by the surrounding social and cultural factors. As Hodges (2010) referring to Bruner (1986) describes:

> It [reading literature] is indeed *multimodal*, exciting the imagination so that readers recognize *actual* worlds and, simultaneously, create *possible* worlds…it places readers in the position of…not only reflecting on what *is* or what *was*, but also asking what *might be*. (p. 65)

Furthermore, as Howard (2011) observes: "…in their pleasure reading, teens gain significant insights into self-identification, self-construction, and self-awareness, all of which aid them in the transition from childhood to adulthood" (53). The socializing natures of children's literature transmits cultural norms on expected behaviours and lets children experiment and reflect upon the motivations and actions of characters presented in the books to see if they are reflective of their own personal belief systems while simultaneously continuously adapting this belief system with each new reading experience. This is seen in both Matthew's and Leah's story as Matthew admits that he used the modeled behaviour to confront bullies while Leah was able to critically assess and reflect upon the negative behaviour displayed in a story written by her favourite author, convincing her to act differently if she were to be in the same situation in real life.

To answer the second sub-question *Is there a link between reading narratives and resilience?*, theoretical discussions as presented in the literature review in Chapter 2 by researchers such as Gold (2001) and Pals (2006) detailed a view whereby the belief that engaging children with modelled behaviour of resilient characters in literature, especially fiction, would instill resilience. However, no empirical studies exist that verify these claims. In fact, there are no published studies linking the engagement of children with resilient literature as

having an effect on their everyday coping strategies. Instead, as stated previously, there are numerous articles (Breslin, 2005; Duimstra, 2003; Iaquinta & Hipsky, 2006; Lucas & Soares, 2013; Roberts & Crawford, 2008; Rozalski, Stewart, & Miller, 2010) in the field of education and bibliotherapy which identify specific books as good examples to demonstrate resilient behaviour to children. While these articles provide training to educators on how best to approach the teaching and application of these books in the classroom, and emphasize the importance of engaging children in discussing these identified books and stories, there is no published research demonstrating that children actually applied the lessons and behaviour modelled in the stories in their own lives, in particular in challenging situations, and what the outcome was.

Based on the results presented in the previous chapter, especially the responses to Question 18 *Can you think of a time when reading stories help/helped you in life?*, it can be stated that the act of reading narratives can be defined as a strategy for supporting an adaptive system for resilience, since both children and adults reported that reading for them was an escape from a stressful situation in a particular point in their lives. This momentary escape allowed them to withdraw into other worlds and experience the lives of others before returning to reality. As such, this strategy "…does not require extraordinary resources…" (Masten, 2009, p. 30) since all that is needed is a story that enthralls the reader. As this strategy would be fluid in adapting to situations of differing challenges, it can be likened to the concept of a protective process as defined by Rutter (1987) who states: "The search is not for factors that make us feel good but for processes that protect us again risk mechanisms." (p. 318), since "[p]rotection, …resides, not in the evasion of the risk, but in successful engagement with it." (p. 318). He concludes his description with the words "The protection stems from the adaptive changes that follow successful coping" (p. 318).

Returning to the lived experiences narrated by both children and adults it can be said that by drawing upon their secondary memory (Graesser & Clark, 1985) both children and adults recognize the importance of both the act of reading and reading narratives themselves as a coping process to deal with stressful situations. Both children and adults commented on the calming effect of reading books and the act of reading by recognizing this effect as a therapeutic coping mechanism to help them overcome stressful situations. Reading for them was a conscientious tactic with which they were able to remove themselves mentally from a situation until they perceived the stressor to either have subsided or disappeared altogether, or had gained enough mental capacity to engage with the stressor again.

This kind of coping strategy is reflective of the five-steps in the self-regulation strategy proposed by Shanker (2016) which he defines as follows:

1. Read the signs and reframe the behaviour.
2. Identify the stressors.
3. Reduce the stress.
4. Reflect. Become aware of when you're overstressed.
5. Respond. Figure out what helps you calm, rest and recover. (p. 27)

Reflecting back on the answers received by the research participants and applying the five steps outlined by Shanker (2016) above, children and adults who discussed how reading calmed them down would have mentally worked through the first three stages and would have recognized the strategy of using reading as a way to regulate one's emotions. One example would be the child Hannah who mentioned that the act of reading calmed her down enough to be able to concentrate on her homework with the words "And when I am upset doing homework, I just like to step away and I just read and it calms me down." Hannah's answer implies that this type of self-

regulating action has also become a habit for her (Rutter, 1989, p. 44). The responses for Julia, Lina and Eleanor are captured in Table 7 in the previous chapter and reflect that the act of reading as escape has become a self-regulating action for these adults. Shanker (2010) refers to such a self-regulating action as an activity which is "actively self-selected" (Asking Why section, para. 5) reinforcing the notion that reading could be described as a protective factor since it provides a positive influence on the adaptive system as it continually strengthens the individual's concept of self and one's capabilities. As such, it should be added to the list of adaptive systems implicated in resilience research as outlined by Masten (2007) on which she lists "Self-regulation, self-direction, response inhibition systems" (p. 926). Self-regulation has its own category, but the list compiled by Masten (2007) also includes "soothing rituals and routines" (p. 926) under the category of "Family systems" (p. 926), into which reading for pleasure could also fit as evidenced by the responses of children and adults in the current study.

To further empathize the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis, in the field of organizational behaviour, the self-regulating coping strategy inherent in the act of reading can be compared to the work-life recovery model which is currently being advocated in the business world (Butts, Becker, & Boswell, 2015; Sonnentag & Niessen, 2008), where working adults are encouraged to not engage in any work related activities, including checking emails, outside of working hours to recover from the stress of work.

Combined with the observation that while every child matures at an individualized pace, there are key intervals in which positive interventions or reinforcements are more effective than at other times – "there also appear to be windows of opportunity in development where the leverage for change increases" (Masten, 2009, p. 31). In the field of education, exposure to books (either through structured reading times, assigned readings are having the teacher read out loud

to the entire class) are already recognized to be a protective resource within the school environment (Masten, 2009), so to ensure children are encouraged and supported to use this resource as much as possible, it would be beneficial to extend support for this resource outside of school hours as well. Continuing to have students visit school libraries (if they are still in existence at a school) and letting them explore various subject matters to which they might otherwise not be exposed should continue to be part of the regular school life and school week until well into high school. For children who are home-schooled frequent, almost constant, exposure to books seems to be more easily achieved as parents who home school usually create their curriculum from a variety of print-based resources. It would therefore be prudent for caregivers, educators, mentors, etc., to continue to encourage and support reading as the child moves through the various stages of development into adulthood. In addition, as Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodrick, & Sawyer (2002), explain

> While identifying what resources should be the target of effective intervention is important, determining how to impart these resources to young people is equally important. The view of many writers in the field [of resilience] is that young people learn critical, adaptive skills not so much through instruction, but through experience. (pp. 6-7),

the behaviour modeled in the stories should be encouraged to be practiced by educators, parents and peers to help the child gain a skillset in applying positive coping strategies in a variety of situations and promote positive outcomes and reduce negative outcomes.

The data gathered via interviews with both children and adults appears at first glance to support the theoretical developmental pathway which had initially been proposed in theory and identified in Chapter 1 to answer the main research question *How does the reading of text-based*

narratives (in children's literature) support the development of resilience in children (ages 10-13 years)?. However, based on the thematic analysis of the responses given by both the child and adult research participants, the following refinements, indicated in italic script, must be made to the proposed pathway to adequately reflect the research findings along with the fluid and dynamic nature of the actual relationship between reading and resilience:

Figure 3. Modified Theoretical Developmental Pathway

Point of Reference → (reading narratives: *involves both the act of reading and reading fictional stories*)	Protective *Factor* ↔ (nurturing experience via emotional attachment, reflective of dispositional attributes of the individual: *attachment is either to a specific character (either their personality and/or their actions) or to the act of reading itself as reading provides comfort/escape/feelings of well-being and self-soothing*)	Individual's Adaptive System ↔ (strengthened concept of self and one's capabilities, emergence/adjustment of coping mechanisms, and increased resilience: *this is a fluid not static process building upon previous reading experiences and real-life experiences, both positive and negative*)

Figure 3. Modified theoretical developmental pathway proposed by the author and based on research findings. Modifications to the Theoretical Developmental Pathway presented in Figure 1 are indicated here in italics.

This pathway is most notably demonstrated by the child participant Matthew (age 13) who gave the example of how reading books by J.R.R. Tolkien helped him cope with bullies at his school as discussed in the previous chapter. Matthew's statements demonstrate that for him the act of reading a specific narrative, in this instance the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy became first a point of reference as he was turning to this story and its positive characterization of the main protagonist, Frodo, for guidance "to get a clear picture into my mind." While Alexander, Miller, and Hengst, (2001) discuss how young children (ages 2 – 5 years of age) form emotional

attachments to stories and that "these connections between real life and narrative provide a basis upon which the child can personalize the story, identify with the characters and use the story to help manage emotional concerns." (p. 387) the process that they have identified can also be applied to early adolescent like Matthew who formed an attachment to the characters and that this attachment had had an effect on his frame of mind. This affect can be seen in how his attachment with the characters in the story becomes a protective factor as he relates the characterizations to his personal life: "even though I don't feel too happy, there is something that I can probably do that they couldn't." This realization and belief in his own abilities leads to a positive influence on Matthew's adaptive system as he reframes and re-evaluates his competencies in a positive light to allow him "to achieve my goals and not to worry too much about the bullies…"

Hannah (age 10) also demonstrated her understanding on how the act of reading is a point of reference for her when she explains how reading helps her: "When I am really stressed…, it helps me calm down. And when I am upset doing homework, I just like to step away and I just read and it calms me down." By selecting reading for pleasure as the activity of choice to help calm her down in times of anger or distress Hannah shows that she recognizes that reading is a protective factor which enables her to calm down and then go back to the task that was upsetting her, such as challenging homework. When asked the probing questions "Can you give me an example? Is there a specific story that you read" by the researcher, Hannah answered with "I read…*Harry Potter*" a book that she had already mentioned right at the beginning of the interview and continued to refer to during the interview to emphasize the fact that she liked to read fantasy because it made her think about "sort of being in another world" which makes her feel "good…because when I am reading that book, that, it's like no one is around to disturb,

so…". These statements indicate that Hannah values the peace and solitude that reading brings her as well as recognizing the calming effect that reading has on her.

This pathway was also demonstrated by adults, such as Sarah who used one particular story in book form as both a physical and psychological protective barrier to escape bullying at school. An even more striking example was the assertion made by Sophia (age 54) who explained how having unread books in her bedroom literally prevented her from committing suicide when she states "…it was, it was knowing that there were books in fact, sitting there on the desk that I hadn't read yet, that made me not do it [commit suicide]" at the age of 13.

In addition, the majority of the responses of the adults presented in Table 6 identified reading as an escape from their present situation and recognized that the act of reading gave them the necessary distance from whatever was acting as a stressor at that time. This gaining of distance while engaged in the act of reading for pleasure can be explained by Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) *Theory of Optimal Experience* which is described as follows by Rane-Szostak and Herth (1995): "A truly enjoyable experience leads to an altered sense of time duration, a sense of control over one's own actions, and the emergence of a stronger sense of self" (p. 101). Furthermore, the adults describing their reading as escape are all avid readers and thus would also fall into the category of ludic readers as defined by Nell (1988b) who describes the act of ludic reading as "the experience of being lost in a book, in absorption or entrancement" (p.8). This absorption leads to a shift in self-awareness of the reader. According to Nell (1988a), "[b]ecause of the heavy demands reading makes on conscious attention, the reader is effectively shielded from other demands, whether internal or external" (p. 9) and the effects of this shield can be seen in the descriptions by the adults in their responses in Table 7. It is also interesting to note that none of the adults who used reading books for pleasure as an escape mentioned or

identified the specific story that they had been reading, only that they had been engaged in the act of reading. This is significant as it once again does not support the theory put forward by researchers such as Crago (2005) that readers internalize what they read and thus shape their identity: "…when preferred texts are read again and again, or are brooded over in memory, they become, in turn, potent shaping influences over the reader's future self-concept and life path. Key texts may then become 'potentiating devices', eliciting from individuals the full development of what is already latent within them, but which might never flower otherwise" (p. 186).

A further finding is the recognition by both adults and children that they would choose a book depending on what mood they are in. While this revelation further supports the model proposed by Ross (1999) detailing that the process used by adult readers to choose a book is primarily based upon "what mood am I in?" this thesis adds the perspective by both children and adults that they like to read different kinds of books for different kinds of moods. This is exemplified by statements such as "I don't have a favourite book. I have a bunch of books that I pretty much like when I am in a different mood" (Tyler, age 11), or indicating that the choice of either the genre of the book or the expected story line is reflective of the mood and perhaps either supports the mood or combats it. This self-selection of reading material could be likened to self-medication or self-diagnosis, and is reflective of therapeutic strategies employed in the field of bibliotherapy which "…does not aim at producing interpretation, but rather at satisfying readers' affective and cognitive needs and creating positive psychological development" (Cheu, 2001, p. 38). Ross (1999) describes this development as a result of a reader making the right match with a book: "When the right match is made between reader and story, readers use the text to create a story about themselves. They read themselves into the story and then read the story into their

lives, which then becomes a part of them" (p. 793). The notion of having a story match a reader could not only explain why readers have to be in a certain mood to read a certain story, but could also explain the reluctance of some of the interview respondents to recommend books and stories which they had enjoyed reading to others as they recognize that everyone has different tastes and preferences. Mary gives a good description of the frustration she felt when she receives books as gifts that she just could not get in to:

> Well, just I guess when somebody gives you a book it's a special gift to me because they've given you a world and I feel, feel cross I can't get into that world. Because chances are they've given it to you because they've enjoyed it, so I keep trying, because I think there's got to be something here, but it doesn't always work because it's, we all have different experience so we relate to stories in different ways… But it seems disappointing when it's been a gift and you know somebody else has thoroughly enjoyed.

She also explains how she has also been the giver of books that have not been well received:

> But I've done the same thing. I've raved over a book and given it to somebody and they politely say "Hm, yes. It was very good.", and you think "I don't think they've actually read it because obviously it didn't click for them"… I mean, that happens with lots of things, doesn't it. But it all relates to the same thing, because it depends on your background and yeah.

Contributions to Scholarship

Beyond supporting the proposed theoretical pathway with empirical data and refinements, this thesis makes a noteworthy contribution to the research in the interdisciplinary field of human studies as it presents a link between recreational reading and resilience not previously examined in the research literature in the disciplinary fields of education, library

science, narrative studies or cognitive psychology, particularly by comparing data presented by both children and adults. Previous studies on recreational reading, particularly in the field of library science, have based their research and observations on reading preferences of either adults (Moyer, 2007; Nell, 1988a; Ross, 1999; Stokmans, 1999; Summers, 2013) or children (Coles & Hall, 2002; Creel, 2007; Davila & Patrick, 2010; Farris, Werderich, Nelson & Fuhler, 2009; Hopper, 2005; Howard, 2011; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; Russell, 1948). While not exhaustive, these studies have nevertheless consistently uncovered similar themes of readers reading recreationally and gaining educational outcomes by learning about people and relationships; learning about other countries, cultures, and time periods; learning new perspectives or insights into the world around them, or simply enriching their lives (Howard, 2011; Moyer, 2007). However, in focusing only on either children or adults within one study, they do not provide a direct comparative analysis of responses given by children and adults to the same set of questions to trace the development of these themes across these phases of life. They also do not make a link between of the cognitive and affective qualities of recreational reading with resilience and coping strategies, instead staying firmly within the boundaries of their disciplinary fields and making recommendations for further research within their fields such as further studying the relationship "…between reading and visiting the library as a child and being a leisure reader as an adult" (Moyer, 2007, p. 76) in the field of library science.

Parsons (2006) comes closest in her attempt to identify a theoretical link between psychology and children's literature when she attempts to answer the question "Why does reading for pleasure increase resilience?" She begins by explaining that "…although reading for pleasure has been identified as one of the forty key indicators of a resilient child, neither

literature scholars nor psychologists have had anything to say about how reading for pleasure builds resilience" (p. 129). She continues her argument by saying

> …that texts for children produce an image of childhood that models resilience strategies both in terms of individual characters and in terms of the operations of narrative as a form. In addition, the invitations in the reading process to inhabit another set of circumstances, another perspective (or a range of other perspectives) teaches children ways of reading not only fictional texts, but of reading their worlds, themselves, and other people." (p. 132).

While her claims are only theoretical as they lack any empirical evidence, Parsons (2006) does also identify the void that has been identified in this thesis with the words:

> Resilience-forming properties in narratives are yet to be examined with any kind of rigour, perhaps because the psychologists involved in researching resilience are untrained in the area of literary research, while literary scholars are equally unlikely to be versed in resilience theory. (pp. 128-129)

Combining literary theory with psychology she goes on to claim "…that reading teaches the kinds of imaginative skills necessary for empathy and the reading of motivations, and demonstrates the diversity of human responses and experiences" (pp. 133-134) and ultimately falls back on using bibliotherapy to shape resilience strategies (in theory) in children.

In comparison, this thesis, provides empirical data which shows that it is BOTH the story and plot AND how the child or adult reader saw themselves reflected in the story (i.e., identifying with characters both in the main and supporting roles) that are an important component in constructing "strategies of actions" for individuals as detailed by Swidler (1986).

In addition, research participants also saw the act of reading itself as a protective process allowing them to self-regulate emotions or mentally remove themselves from stressful situations.

This thesis further supports research that describes the "empowerment" effect of reading literature, described by Howard (2011) as "[s]ome teens felt that their reading for pleasure had given them more than information and insights; it had empowered them to have strong beliefs and to act those beliefs in the future" (p. 51). As Rutter (1989) explains, "…there is evidence that successful coping and/or positive experiences tend to be protective, and it is plausible that the protection lies in the enhanced self-confidence that derives from the experiences" (p. 43). This recognition also helps to provide "empirical demonstration that fiction matters to the mental health and life skills of readers" (Gold & Gloade, 1988, p. 24).

Books have been published which have collected adult readers' discussions of their favourite books. The most recent one edited by La Force (2012) and entitled *My ideal bookshelf,* presents a collection of essays from some well-known figures in the arts and entertainment business discussing some of the books which have been the most memorable for them for individual reasons. Other books such as *The Novel Cure: An A-Z of Literary Remedies* by Berthoud and Elderkind (2013) classify certain stories as being a cure for specific ailments and prescribe certain books to read to help various conditions such as depression, loneliness, etc. What is lacking in all of these collections is an in-depth analysis of the readers' narratives to ascertain any kind of lasting effect of having read a certain kind of book or narrative. As this thesis is not a longitudinal study a lasting effect of reading a certain book or narrative was not found. However, the structure of the interview for this thesis did capture a glimpse of a lasting effect that reading and re-reading certain books as children has had on adults, specifically *The*

Chronicles of Narnia, as demonstrated by statements given by Mary who reflected on what it had felt like to read the books as a child:

> Of learning something, and realizing something you didn't know before and relating it to your own life, and, I hate to say it, but the 'aha' moment, when you 'wow, I never thought of it that way' and yet, there it is, jumping off the page at you. I like that. And I think the Narnia books must have done something similar to me when I was a child, sort of revelations of the whole religious thing. But also that kids could do things, achieve things…,

and then as an adult

> …I often think about the children coming back in time, and trying to explain that they have been gone for years, and not being believed. You can remember the sensation when adults didn't believe what you're saying, because that happens to children….I mean we all disbelieve children sometimes and dismiss them. And they're telling us the truth. So, that's what you see when you read it as an adult. You see it from the other side. So I guess the Narnia books run right through my life…

Recent studies by Mar et al., (2009) in the field of cognitive psychology have shown the ability of narratives to aid in the creation of emotion and transference of eliciting empathy for a character in a book onto real-life scenarios. However, their research findings were collected by having adult readers read the same short text and then answer a series of questions to measure their use of empathy and purposefully eliciting emotion. In contrast, this thesis examines the possible link between the act of reading narratives in self-selected pleasure reading and resilience by collecting semi-structured and highly personalized reading histories of both children and adults, and thus contributes further layer of data by including the voices of child readers.

While empathy is considered to be a necessary trait displayed by resilient children as social competence, since according to Zolkoski and Bullock (2012) "[s]ocial competence includes qualities such as empathy, caring, flexibility, communication skills, and a sense of humor" (p. 2296), this thesis provides the insight that the evocation of empathy by reading narratives via self-selected recreational reading could also aid in the building of resilience. This link was particularly demonstrated by children such as Noah and Hannah who identified more with the secondary characters who were helping the main characters cope. Hannah gave the following response: "Yeah., the fairy's friend. She's the one who convinces her that she, like, actually is loved by a lot of people," where the fairy is the main character of the story that Hannah had read. These statements support the research of Kidd and Castano (2013) which "suggests that reading fiction increases self-reported empathy" (p. 377) and that "fiction may change how, not just what, people think about others" (p. 377). Interestingly, by having the children identify more with the secondary characters instead of the main characters, this observation runs counter to the claims presented in the secondary literature, specifically by Cecil and Roberts (1992) who stated "…readers can reflect for weeks upon the action taken by main characters and continue to come up with a myriad of actions that might also have been taken" (p. xii). This observation could also describe the children's view of their place in society by aligning themselves with a supporting role in life and as such being more observers and by-standers instead of the main doer or protagonist.

In summary, the contributions of this thesis are to theory, method and data. It furthers discussions on how reading can support resilience by creating a link and thus bridging the previously identified void between already established conclusions from fields in the humanities (e.g., reader-response theory, narrative studies) with fields in the social sciences (cognitive

psychology, bibliotherapy, library science, resilience studies) and the field of education. It contributes to methods used within narrative analysis by outlining how a comparative intrathematic and interthematic analysis was undertaken to analyze data which consisted of responses from both children (ages 10 – 13 years) and adults (ages 18-91 years) to an almost identical set of questions. These responses were first analyzed as two separate data sets before being combined into one data set for the identification of overarching themes to answer the main research question.

Limitations of Study

It should be acknowledged that some crucial data was not collected as the researcher was a novice and did not consistently probe questions to delve deeper into the information provided by the respondent. The interview was structured in such a way that it was not asking direct or leading questions so as to not lead the interviewees to give the desired answer. Instead, the questions built upon themselves and led the reader from general recall of factual information to more in-depth reflections on where and what they read to why they read and what they got out of either the act of reading or the reading material itself. As the interview progressed, the last questions were not asked of 5 children and 2 adults as the researcher felt at that point in the interview that asking those question(s) would not gather any further useful data given the direction the interview had taken at that particular point in time.

A further limitation may be that while the sample size was not small it was also not random because of the snowball and convenience recruitment method used to recruit the research participants. It is also not a representative sample as once again the sample was recruited using the convenience method, even though the researcher was able to interview children and adults outside of the immediate area of Greater Sudbury. Nevertheless, there have been no studies

published where both children and adults have been asked to respond to the same questions in one single study about their reading habits and preferences and where results are presented with a comparative critical analysis. Furthermore, the researcher did interview a child (Noah) and an adult (George) who identified themselves as non-readers. Their responses contributed to the research findings as they did complete the interview and provide responses to the questions. Even though Noah (age 11) stated that he did not like to read books and stories "[b]ecause they're long and hard" he did reveal that he reads mostly at school and actually read a fair amount of books when questioned, in particular book series such as *The Hunger Games*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and manga comic books. While he did answer all questions, his answers were rather short and did not reflect any kind of deep engagement with either the characters or the storyline in any of the books that he had read, which was also reflected by the fact that he did not get excited when talking about a specific book or story. George (age 52) also did not like to read stories and books saying "I just…uhm, I have a hard time focusing on the story over several days or weeks", preferring to read social streams and twitter and articles on technology.

By selecting the participants via the convenience and snowball methods it is obvious from the answers that the majority of the adult participants were avid readers who were eager to be asked about their reading habits. This may have contributed to participating or self-selection bias. As Robinson (2014) states "The self-selection bias is not possible to circumvent in interview-based research, as voluntary participation is central to ethical good practice …" (p. 36). Interestingly enough the reading habits of the children participants were more evenly distributed, meaning that only half identified themselves as avid readers, which could be attributed to the fact that they are just at the beginning of their reading lives and have not yet fully gained an understanding of their personal relationship with books and stories. It would

therefore be interesting to repeat this research study using a different sampling method of selecting participants, thus reducing the self-selection bias to see whether the results for both adults and children could be replicated.

A last limitation would be the limitation of self-reflection in the self-reporting of events by the interview participants. As Polkinghorne (2005) indicates

> Although self-report evidence is necessary and valuable for the inquiry about human experience, it is not to be misconstrued as mirrored reflections of experience. People do not have complete access to their experiences. The capacity to be aware of or to recollect one's experiences is intrinsically limited. People do not have a clear window into their inner life. (p. 139)

However, as this thesis does not rely on collecting specific factual details such as dates and places from the participants, but rather is more concerned with the thoughts and emotions brought forward by the act of reading, the limitation of self-reporting can thus be minimized.

Implications for Future Research

The interthematic analysis revealed three possible areas where further research could be undertaken. The first area for future research would be for a comprehensive longitudinal study following school-age children into adulthood and beyond to study how they interact with stories especially meant to foster resilience as identified by educators in the field. Recent studies with children have focused on how reading for pleasure and literacy could support higher academic achievement and academic resilience (Campbell, 2007; Clark & Rumbold, 2006; Lamme, 1976; McTigue, Washburn, & Liew, 2009; Merga & Moon, 2016; Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005; Worthy, Turner, & Moorman, 1998) and have advocated for school curricula and teachers of

middle school classes to actively encourage self-selected reading for pleasure, both inside and outside of the classroom. Furthermore, as Olsson et al. (2003) explain:

> While identifying what resources should be the target of effective intervention is important, determining how to impart these resources to young people is equally important. The view of many writers in the field [of resilience] is that young people learn critical, adaptive skills not so much through instruction, but through experience. (pp. 6-7)

A longitudinal study identifying if there is indeed a lasting effect of reading stories (either through self-selected reading for pleasure or structured reading in class) modelling resilient behaviour by having children practicing the modelled behaviour through experiential learning could prove to be very insightful as the current study suggests that children including those adults who reflected upon their relationships with books in their childhood, did find coping strategies either by reading certain stories or by personalizing the actions of characters. They also explain how simply using the act of reading as a way to remove themselves from stressful situations allowed them to recover enough perspective and energy to cope with those situations to move forward and tackle the next challenging situation. Such a proposed longitudinal study could be held in conjunction with the current school curriculum *Extending Understanding* (2006, p. 112) which covers reading instruction in the province of Ontario for Grade 6. The curriculum asks students to make connections between what they read and between their personal life, such as experiences that they have gone through (text to self), or intertextual reflection (text to text) or if they have heard about it or seen in the media (text to world). Research which follows these students to see how and if they actually continually incorporate and adapt these connections as coping strategies as they mature would provide further insight into how best to strengthen the resilience potential in children using current school literacy curriculum.

A second area for further research would be into the finding of this study that readers read different genres and stories depending on their mood at the time of book selection. According to Mar et al., (2011)

> the influence of mood on the selection of media has been extensively studied by Zillman (1988), who proposed a theory known as mood-management…From this we would predict that a reader who is happy and in a good mood should seek out books that don't interfere with this emotional state or that help promote it. Similarly, readers who are unhappy should select a book that will help turn this mood around….Empirically, research on television (Bryant & Zillman, 1984; Zillman, Hezel & Medoff, 1980) and music (Knobloch & Zillmann, 2002) has been consistent with mood-management predictions, with participants induced to feel bad moods choosing media to alleviate them, and those induced to feel positive moods choosing media to sustain these feelings. (p. 819)

What is of note in this statement is the fact that mood-management was studied using media such as film and music, not textual fiction, and that participants were induced into certain moods with the aim that the choice of preferred media would then either counter or support those moods. In this thesis the participants themselves revealed how book selection choices depended on their moods as Mary (age 60) states in her response to Question 6 *If we were to go to a bookstore or a library together, what would you choose to read? What types of books?*:

> I would go to different sections depending on my mood, where I was in my life, or whether I was feeling good, or…if I want light reading I'll get some kind of historical, or whodunit or those kind of things. If I am just feeling myself I would probably go for books which are based on true stories. I really find that I like those now, because they

> may be fictionalized, but I know they're, there's a basis in truth and I find them more meaningful now."

Mar et al., (2011) further commented that "…work on how mood influences the selection of narrative media has not yet been undertaken with respect to fictional literature," (p. 821) and as such this would be an area where further study would be beneficial, as this thesis does not examine this phenomenon beyond initial hypotheses and predictions.

A third area of further research would involve a more in-depth study of the effect on human development of re-reading books and stories either for comfort or because of the different lenses and perspective that can be brought to rereading books and stories by the child moving into adulthood. It was the adults who explained their need to re-read books, indicating that for some readers the re-reading of familiar or well-loved book brought further comfort or increased knowledge. As Mary (age 60) explains in her re-reading of *The Chronicles of Narnia* how she became aware of how Christianity was interwoven into the narrative – something of which she had not been aware when she had read the book as a child. This proposed area for further study could center on the words used by some of the research participants, such as Grace (aged 91) who stated early on in the interview "I do like to reread my books" and explains "[t]hey're regulars that come out every so often. I reread them." She goes on to refer to her favourite books as good friends when she explains that "All books are important to me. One thing I cannot do is throw a book away…It's almost like killing somebody. They all have their personalities, don't they?" Nell (1988b) had uncovered in his pilot study interviews with ludic readers that "rereading is the exception rather the rule" (p. 44), while Maine and Wallen (2011) detail how

> …[a]s a literary practice, re-reading is often contrasted with first reading and considered to be focused on interpretation rather than pleasure; but in working with adults returning

> to a childhood text, there is also an element of nostalgic enjoyment and engagement to be explored. (p. 358)

Further exploration of the theme and act of re-reading would be useful to provide further insight into how such a re-engagement with familiar stories and characters supports an individual's cognitive development over their lifetime.

Summary

Both the act of reading for pleasure and what narrative is being read can work together to support positive coping strategies and build resilience in human beings. This thesis examined the effect of reading books and stories on human development via the engagement with textual narratives to answer the main research question *How does the reading of text-based narratives (in children's literature) support the development of resilience in children (ages 10-13 years)*?

Responses given by at least two children and one adult explicitly demonstrate the positive effect that a certain narrative has had on them as it modeled for them coping skills and positive behaviour which they were then able to apply in their everyday lives. The positive modelling contained within narratives can be traced back to its function as an "informal cultural practice" (Swidler, 1986, p. 273) providing "cultural components that are used to construct strategies of action" (Swidler, 1986, p. 273).

A further three children and ten adults stated explicitly that they used the act of reading as a recovery mechanism whereby they were able to remove themselves from stressful situations such as times of depression, loneliness and facing unpleasant chores. Even though only three children were able to recognize that reading for pleasure helped them cope with situations that cause them stress as compared to the higher number of adults it demonstrates that the creation of a developmental pathway supporting resilience is created in childhood and strengthened as they

move into adulthood via reading for pleasure by first becoming a point of reference and then a protective factor.

This is an important discovery as it provides a link specifically between the fields of cognitive psychology and resilience studies in the social sciences and narrative studies and reader-response theory in the humanities by defining and formally recognizing both the act of reading for pleasure itself and the act of reading narratives as a protective factor for individual children and adults.

As demonstrated by their responses, children and adults are able to take action by either creating or adapting coping strategies of protective factors specific to the individual, as outlined in the modified theoretical developmental pathway in Figure 3. They are able to achieve this either through the act of reading for pleasure or the engagement with a narrative. This enables the growth and strengthening of resilience throughout human development for individual readers, whether children or adults, as they choose to engage with self-selected reading materials that either support them in the way they see themselves and their place within and interaction with the world around them, or provide them with the necessary distance between the immediate stressor and the reader to enable them to cope by allowing them to step away from the situation and either recover or gain the necessary strength to positively interact with the stressful situation.

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Appendix 1:

APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
Research Ethics Board – Laurentian University

This letter confirms that the research project identified below has successfully passed the ethics review by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB). Your ethics approval date, other milestone dates, and any special conditions for your project are indicated below.

TYPE OF APPROVAL / New X / Modifications to project / Time extension

Name of Principal Investigator and school/department	Bettina Brockerhoff-Macdonald/ PHD Human Studies
Title of Project	How does reading support resilience? An interdisciplinary narrative study involving children and adults.
REB file number	2014-09-07
Date of original approval of project	Sept 24, 2014
Date of approval of project modifications or extension *(if applicable)*	
Final/Interim report due on: *(You may request an extension)*	Sept 24, 2015
Conditions placed on project	

During the course of your research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment or consent forms may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to the Research Ethics website to complete the appropriate REB form.

All projects must submit a report to REB at least once per year. If involvement with human participants continues for longer than one year (e.g. you have not completed the objectives of the study and have not yet terminated contact with the participants, except for feedback of final results to participants), you must request an extension using the appropriate LU REB form. In all cases, please ensure that your research complies with Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Also please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence with the REB office.

Congratulations and best wishes in conducting your research.

Rosanna Langer, PHD, Chair, *Laurentian University Research Ethics Board*